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CHRIST AND HUMAN LIFE

LECTURES

DELIVERED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

IN JANUARY, 1901

TOGETHER WITH A SERMON ON
THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

BY

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PREFACE

THE four lectures in this volume on Christ and Human Life were delivered to the St. Paul's Lecture Society in January, 1901. A few passages which were omitted or summarized in delivery through lack of time are included.

The sermon was preached in 1900, at the patronal festival of the Church of All Saints, Notting Hill.

The author is fully conscious that the lectures and the sermon give very scanty treatment to great subjects, and he would have hesitated to publish them had it not been for the hope that the clear and simple statements he has endeavoured to make may be of service to some who would find less help in more lengthy and elaborate works. He has to thank his friend, the Rev. C. O. Becker, of the Church of St. Barnabas, Pimlico, for valuable suggestions.

CONTENTS

LECTURE I.

	PAGE
CHRIST AND JUDAISM	I

LECTURE II.

CHRIST AND HEATHENISM	33
---------------------------------	----

LECTURE III.

CHRIST AND MODERN THOUGHT	67
-------------------------------------	----

LECTURE IV.

CHRIST AND MODERN LIFE	95
----------------------------------	----

A SERMON.

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD	121
---------------------------------	-----

CHRIST AND JUDAISM

LECTURE I.

CHRIST AND JUDAISM.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ, it was said towards the end of the second century, "summed up man into Himself."¹ In that famous saying St. Irenaeus was evidently recalling the words of St. Paul that it was the purpose of God the Father "to sum up all things in Christ."² The sentence means, in part, that our Lord showed how human life might attain to its highest perfection. It means, also, that in Him there is the satisfaction of the needs of the human race.

The general subject of these lectures is that of Christ and human life. The aim in them is to try to see what are some of the needs of the world, and how these needs are satisfied in Christ. We are to consider His message

¹ St. Irenaeus, "C. Haer.," V. xiv. 2. Cf. III. xvi. 6 ; xviii. 1, 7 ; xxi. 10 ; xxii. 2, 3.

² Eph. i. 10.

for Judaism, His message for heathenism, His message for modern thought, His message for modern life. This first lecture is to be on that race of which, "as concerning the flesh, Christ came,"¹ and on the satisfaction provided for it in Him. This particular inquiry has an interest and an importance which are not historical only. For if to the men of His own time the Lord had no word which could really go home to their hearts, we should have less confidence that He has teaching and help for us. If He supplied what they truly needed, our hope that in His life and words there is a message for us too may be increased.

I.

For the Jews of the time of the Incarnation one consciously felt need was that of the Messiah Who should fulfil the prophecies of the Old Testament. Different lines of evidence concur in showing that such a fulfilment was anticipated. St. Paul, in an Epistle acknowledged as his even by critics who

¹ Rom. ix. 5.

reduce the genuine Pauline Epistles to a very small number, shows that correspondence between the facts of the life of the Messiah and the anticipations of the Old Testament was a matter of importance to the mind of a Jew. "Christ died for our sins," he says, "according to the Scriptures ; . . . He hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." ¹ In the speech delivered by the same Apostle at Antioch in Pisidia, recorded by the historian of whose careful accuracy recent years have supplied new proofs, it is taken for granted that Jewish believers will expect to find the fulfilment of prophecy in the true Messiah.² A similar conception of the purpose of the Old Testament was one to which, at the very outset of the life of the Christian Church, St. Peter was able to appeal when addressing those adherents of the Jewish religion who were gathered together at Jerusalem "from every nation under heaven." ³ St. Matthew's Gospel bears many marks of being the work of one who had carried on into Christianity the mind of a devout Jew. He himself evidently attached

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4.² Acts xiii. 26-39.³ Acts ii. 5-36.

great importance to the fulfilment of prophecy;¹ and he records that the leaders of the Jewish religion at the time of the birth of Christ believed that a forecast of the life of the Messiah could be derived from the study of the Old Testament Scriptures.² In St. John's Gospel the ordinary opinion of the Jews is represented as having been that the Messiah would come as the Scriptures had foretold.³ So, also, the Aramaic paraphrases of the Old Testament, which, though in their present form perhaps dating only from the fourth century of the Christian era, appear to contain a method of interpretation and even details of exegesis which were known and generally accepted at a much earlier date, refer to the prophecies as statements of those things which the Messiah was appointed to fulfil. To give two instances only, the words of Isaiah, read by the Church of England in the First Lesson at Morning Prayer on Christmas Day, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given," are said to be a description of "the Man Who abides for ever, the Messiah, in whose days there will be an

¹ St. Matt. ii. 15, 17, 18, 23; iv. 14-16; viii. 17, etc.

² St. Matt. ii. 4-6.

³ St. John vii. 41, 42.

increase of peace;"¹ and the words of Jeremiah foretelling the day when "the watchmen upon the hills of Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God" are described in the touching phrase with which St. Luke's Gospel has made us familiar as telling of "the years of consolation which are to come . . . in the land of Israel."²

Thus there are converging lines of evidence that it was the anticipation of the Jews at the time when our Lord came that the Messiah, Who was to be their deliverer and redeemer, would fulfil the prophecies of the Old Testament.

This conception of the Messiah and of the prophecies was in harmony with the spirit of the Old Testament itself. In the Old Testament, while great realities in the past are again and again appealed to, the habit of looking forward to a satisfaction not immediately found forms a striking feature. If it is the case that "the prophets . . . stand in an intimate relation to the history of their times,"³ it is also true that there are "auguries of

¹ Targum on Isa. ix. 6.

² Targum on Jer. xxxi. 6 ; cf. St. Luke ii. 25.

³ Driver, "Isaiah, His Life and Times," p. 3.

the future . . . which are the unique creation of the Hebrew prophets,"¹ and that "the Old Testament religion is the religion of the redemption believed and hoped for as future."² And, in the words of a distinguished scholar, whose tendency certainly is not to exaggerate considerations of this kind, "It is remarkable how, while most nations placed their visions of perfection in the past, and looked back sorrowfully to a golden age which had passed for ever away, the Jews uniformly looked forward ; how their representative men expressed expectations which nothing in their own age satisfied ; how they held out, and adhered to, ideals which remained unrealized ; how, heedless of the irony of history, they still projected the image of a changed social state ; how they proclaimed the advent of a Prophet and of a King, Who, by the supreme graces of His Person and the superhuman qualities of His rule, should transform and regenerate human nature ; how they announced confidently the future

¹ Driver, " Sermons on Subjects connected with the Old Testament," pp. 68, 69.

² Delitzsch, " Messianic Prophecies in Historical Succession," p. 15.

abolition of restrictions which the principles of their own religion appeared to treat as permanently valid.”¹

Truly, the Jewish anticipation of a Messiah Who should fulfil prophecy was an anticipation well grounded in the Old Testament Scriptures themselves.

As it was anticipated that the Messiah would fulfil prophecy, so also, as a matter of fact, the prophecies were fulfilled in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. To use again words of the writer whom I quoted last, “Distinct lines of prophecy and type converge upon Christ, and He fulfils them. In Him the ideals, flung forth with magnificent profusion upon the pages of the Old Testament, are gathered up and realized.”²

We might well dwell on single facts of deep significance in which prophecy was fulfilled, as that He was born at Bethlehem³ and was the Son of a virgin.⁴ It may perhaps be more helpful to some of us to recall that the central principles of His life were such

¹ Driver, “Sermons on Subjects connected with the Old Testament,” pp. 141, 142.

² Ibid., p. 142.

³ St. Matt. ii. 1, with Micah v. 2.

⁴ St. Matt. i. 18-25, with Isa. vii. 14.

a fulfilment, and that He fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies in being the Man of Sorrows and yet the triumphant Victor, in being the human Teacher of God's truth, and in being the superhuman King Who set up a kingdom which, in virtue of its spiritual character and its Divine support, should be able to survive all the vicissitudes of earthly life.¹

II.

"Hope," said a great teacher whose words it is natural to recall in this cathedral, the late Dean Church—"hope" "is the prominent characteristic of the Old Testament."² This hope is based on the conviction of three possibilities. There is the conviction of the possibility of forgiveness. "Happy is he," sang the Psalmist, "whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."³ The whole elaborate system of the sacrifices ordered in the Law implied the hope of pardon. That system reached its summit in the ceremonies

¹ See Liddon, "The Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," pp. 79-91, 101-7.

² Church, "Advent Sermons," p. 92.

³ Ps. xxxii. 1.

of the Day of Atonement. In those ceremonies offering was made for the high priest, for the tabernacle, for the sanctuary, and for the altar; and then it was commanded that the high priest should "lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, even all their sins; and he shall put them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a man that is in readiness into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities into a solitary land."¹ This strange symbol could have meaning only so far as there was a possibility of pardon for sin. That which the Psalmist rejoiced in and the priestly system depicted, was proclaimed by the prophets. "Though your sins be as scarlet," are the words of Isaiah, "they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."² Of "the Servant of the Lord" portrayed by the same prophet it is said, "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows;" "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement

¹ Lev. xvi. 21, 22.² Isa. i. 18.

of our peace was upon Him ; and with His stripes we are healed ;" "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all ;" "For the transgression of My people was He stricken ;" "By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many : and He shall bear their iniquities ;" "He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." ¹ Thus, the conviction that sins could be forgiven found a centre in the hope of one particular life which, being "poured out . . . unto death," might become "an offering for sin." ²

There is the conviction, also, of the possibility of holiness. "Happy are they," we read in the Psalms, "that are of a perfect way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Happy are they that keep His testimonies, that seek Him with the whole heart ; who also work no unrighteousness, who walk in His ways." ³ "I will set no base thing before mine eyes" is the aspiration of another psalm, "I hate the doing of deeds that turn aside from right ; it shall not cleave unto me. A crooked heart shall depart from me ; I will

¹ Isa. liii. 4-6, 8, 11, 12.

² Isa. liii. 10, 12.

³ Ps. cxix. 1-3.

know no evil.”¹ The complicated ceremonies of the Law imply a principle which gives them their meaning, that man can be, and ought to be, clean and holy. The oft-recurring phrase in the Book of Leviticus, “he shall be clean,”² is the outward sign of that inward purification which is not only pardon for sins but also positive holiness. In the prophets, the splendid imagery of Isaiah, “The glowing sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water;” “and a highway shall be there and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness,”³ is only one instance of teaching frequently proclaimed. And this hope of holiness, like the hope of forgiveness, is centred in one life, for a result of the work of “the Servant of the Lord” is declared to be that the people of God “shall be called trees of righteousness.”⁴

Thirdly, there is the possibility of communion with God. “Happy are they,” says the Psalmist again, “that dwell in Thy house: they will be still praising Thee. Happy is the man whose strength is in Thee; in whose heart are the highways to Zion. Passing

¹ Ps. ci. 3, 4.

² Lev. xiv. 9, 20; xv. 13; xvii. 15, etc.

³ Isa. xxxv. 7, 8.

⁴ Isa. lxi. 3.

through the valley of Weeping they make it a place of springs ; yea, the early rain clotheth it with blessings. They go from strength to strength ; every one of them appeareth unto God in Zion.”¹ The central point of the priestly system and the ceremonial Law was that man might hold communion with God. The words of God Himself appointing the tabernacle and the sacrifices are : “I will meet with the children of Israel ; and the Tent shall be sanctified by My glory. And I will sanctify the Tent of Meeting, and the altar : Aaron also and his sons will I sanctify, to minister to Me in the priest’s office. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them : I am the Lord their God.”² So, too, teach the prophets. “Thou,” are the words of Isaiah addressed to God, “hast been a strong hold to the poor, a strong hold to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat.”³ And this communion of man with

¹ Ps. lxxxiv, 4-7.

² Exod. xxix. 43-46.

³ Isa. xxv. 4.

God was to find special contact in an appointed life ; for of the same " Servant of the Lord " who was to bring pardon and holiness it is said : " The pleasure of the Lord "—that is, the purpose of God to dwell among mankind, " shall prosper in His hand." ¹

This threefold conviction of the possibility of forgiveness, holiness, and communion with God rested on the further belief that God is good. The God Who is proclaimed by lawgiver and psalmist and prophet is, above all things, a holy God. " Ye shall be holy : for I the Lord your God am holy " ² are the words of the Law. In the twenty-second psalm God is addressed : " Thou art holy, O Thou that art enthroned upon the praises of Israel." ³ " The Holy One of Israel " is a name frequently applied by the prophet Isaiah to the God of his people. ⁴

This conception of the goodness of God finds one of its most striking illustrations in the belief that it was His purpose to cause the blessings He had in store for man to reach outside the chosen race. The people of Israel had, indeed, the privilege and the

¹ Isa. liii. 10.

² Lev. xix. 2.

³ Ps. xxii. 3.

⁴ Isa. i. 4 ; v. 19, 24 ; x. 20 ; xli. 14 ; lx. 9, etc.

burden of that vocation which comes to those who possess truths of which others are ignorant, and strength and joy to which others have not yet attained. But it was taught to them that the purpose of vocations does not end with those who themselves are thus called. To Abraham it was said, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."¹ If for a time this truth was obscured in the emphasis laid on the peculiar position and the personal responsibilities to God of the Jewish nation, it found clear utterance in the Psalms and in the teaching of the prophets. In one psalm it is anticipated that the "salvation" of God will be known "among all nations," and that "all the ends of the earth" will "fear Him."² Another psalm, which begins with asserting the Divine love for, and the glory of, Zion, the city of God, goes on to describe God Himself as saying, "I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon as them that know Me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this One was born there;"³ that is, as the words have been well explained, "God

¹ Gen. xii. 3.² Ps. lxvii. 2, 3, 7.³ Ps. lxxxvii. 4.

declares His intention of including the various nations of the earth amongst those who own Him, and of reckoning their members as full-born citizens of Zion."¹ The prophecies of Isaiah are full of glowing descriptions of the coming in of all the nations. In one place it is said, "Many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob ; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths : for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."² In another place, God is depicted as saying to "the Servant of the Lord," "It is too light a thing that Thou shouldest be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel : I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth."³

This anticipation of unity of service had a reasonable basis in the doctrine of the unity of God Himself. "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord,"⁴ was a fundamental maxim of the teaching contained in the Book

¹ Driver, "The Parallel Psalter," p. 255, note 8.

² Isa. ii. 3.

³ Isa. xlix. 6.

⁴ Deut. vi. 4.

of Deuteronomy. "I am the First, and I am the Last; and beside Me there is no God"¹ was a central truth in the prophecy of Isaiah.

III.

Such was the hope of the Jewish nation declared in the Old Testament. It was not altogether lost in the times which followed the period of the prophets. The book called the "Psalms of Solomon" was probably written about the middle of the first century before Christ. In it we find, amid much which is at a lower level than the writings contained in the Old Testament, an anticipation of the Messiah which preserves much of the ancient teaching. "Behold, O Lord," it is there said, "and raise up unto them their King, the Son of David, in the time which Thou, O God, knowest, that He may reign over Israel Thy servant, and gird Him with strength that He may break in pieces them that rule unjustly. . . . He shall gather together a holy people, whom He shall lead in righteousness, and shall judge the tribes of the people that hath been sanctified by the Lord His God. And

¹ Isa. xliv. 6.

He shall not suffer iniquity to lodge in their midst ; and none that knoweth wickedness shall dwell with them. . . . He shall judge the peoples and the nations with the wisdom of His righteousness. And He shall possess the peoples of the nations to serve Him beneath His yoke ; and He shall glorify the Lord in a place to be seen of the whole earth ; and He shall purge Jerusalem and make it holy, even as it was in the days of old, so that the nations may come from the ends of the earth to see His glory, bringing as gifts her sons that had fainted, and may see the glory of the Lord wherewith God hath glorified her. And a righteous King and taught of God is He that reigneth over them ; and there shall be no iniquity in His days in their midst ; for all shall be holy, and their King is the Lord Messiah."¹

As the Messianic hope is thus found in the period preceding the Incarnation, so also much of the higher teaching of the Old Testament is still to be discerned. The "Psalms of Solomon" lay great stress on the

¹ "Psalms of Solomon," xvii. 23-36. Cf. Ryle and James, "Psalms of the Pharisees, commonly called the Psalms of Solomon," pp. lii.-lviii.

evil of impurity, the righteousness of God, and the need of patient goodness.¹ The New Testament, in recording the quiet holiness of Zacharias and Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna, appears to be describing representative lives.² In the community of the Essenes, besides much which was narrow and much which seems to us to be grotesque, there was the clear assertion of the great principle of the value of a life dedicated to God in self-sacrifice, holiness, and love.³ Even among the Pharisees, hypocritical and self-seeking as very many of them had become, the conception of the true Pharisee, the animating motive of whose life was "pure love to God," still remained.⁴ By the Jews as a whole the great truth of the unity of God was now, in distinction from many lapses of earlier times, tenaciously held. The declaration of it from the Book of Deuteronomy was to be recited as a daily duty,⁵ and was written on the roll in the prayer-straps put on during the saying

¹ "Psalms of Solomon," ii. 16, 19, 36; iv., vi., etc.

² St. Luke i. 5-25, 57-79; ii. 25-38.

³ Josephus, "Ant.," XVIII. i.; "B. J.," II. viii.

⁴ See, e.g., "Aboda Sara," 20 a.

⁵ Schürer, "History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ," II. ii. 84.

of the morning prayer.¹ Part of the pathos of the record of the death of the Rabbi Akiba, dying as a martyr for a supposed Messiah one hundred years after Christ, is that he died with the testimony to this truth upon his lips.²

IV.

Yet, to a large extent, the Jews had lost hold of the real significance of the Old Testament. Dividing asunder what in the providential outcome of the Divine counsels had been joined together, too many of them, with a vivid perception of some precepts of the Law, had but little recollection of other precepts contained in it, and had altogether forgotten much in the teaching of the Prophets. And therefore, as happens when men dissociate some parts of truth or of practical methods from other parts which ought to be combined with them, there was perversion and distortion of that which was kept. Current teaching about the Sabbath had

¹ Schürer, "History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ," II. ii. 113.

² Ibid., I. ii. 312, 313.

made that Divine ordinance at once a burden on the life and a trap to the conscience. When it could be seriously contended that the tying of a knot which needed two hands to untie it was a breach of the Sabbath, but that a knot which could be untied by one hand could be lawfully made,¹ it is obvious that a line of thought had been admitted which would have called forth the indignant condemnation of the prophet Isaiah. If there were brighter features in the Sabbatical teaching, as that necessary assistance might be given to a woman in child-birth,² or that even a Gentile might be helped in an accident which endangered his life,³ the element of perversity came in when it was taught that a broken limb might not be set and that cold water might not be poured on a sprained hand.⁴ The Rabbinic doctrine about the Jewish race had so altered the aspect of its Divine mission that it was taught that the wrath of God would not be poured out on any

¹ Schürer, "History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ," II. ii. 98.

² Ibid., II. ii. 103, 104.

³ Ibid., p. 104.

⁴ Ibid. On the Sabbath generally, see also Edersheim, "Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah," ii. 777-787.

child of Abraham, and that all Israel was destined to an inevitable salvation.¹ The practice of fasting was marred by such externalism as that which prescribed that on the lesser fasts a Jew might wash, but on those which were greater he must remain uncleansed.²

V.

Into this Jewish nation, then, preserving in part the hope of the Old Testament, yet losing sight of or perverting the real meaning of the Old Testament message, our Lord Jesus Christ was born. There was in His Manhood something which was unlimited by race and time. Yet He was born a Jew. By genealogies, by the history of His birth, by the record of His circumcision and presentation in the Temple, the Evangelists are at pains to emphasize His Jewish descent. As a Jewish boy, in a Jewish household, with Jewish surroundings, He grew up. Among

¹ Edersheim, "Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah," i. 271, 272.

² Schürer, "History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ," II. ii. 119.

Jews He lived His life, to Jews He made His great appeals, by the attacks of Jews His death was brought about. What then, we ask, did He say to the thought, to the customs, to the religion of the Jews?

In the first place, there was in Him the realization of the great Jewish hope. "It is He," were the words of the angel of the Lord to Joseph the husband of Mary, "that shall save His people from their sins."¹ "The Son of Man," are His own words, "hath power on earth to forgive sins."² "If ye forgive men their trespasses," it is said in His comment on the prayer which He gathered round the truth of the Fatherhood of God, "your heavenly Father will also forgive you."³ And His teaching of the possibility and reality of forgiveness found force and efficacy in that death to which He Himself repeatedly looked forward, and in which it was destined that, in the phrase of St. John, He "should die for the nation."⁴

The Jewish hope was for holiness as well as for pardon. And it is striking to notice how much more in the Gospels bears on

¹ St. Matt. i. 21.

² St. Matt. ix. 6.

³ St. Matt. vi. 14.

⁴ St. John xi. 51.

righteous life than concerns the mere forgiveness of sin. "Blessed are ye;" "Ye are the salt of the earth;" "Ye are the light of the world;" "Ye . . . shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect;" "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you,"¹—these are words of high promise of righteous life.

The hope, moreover, was of communion with God. This communion is proclaimed in the teaching of our Lord. "When ye pray, say, Father;" "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" "I and the Father are One;" "This is My Body;" "This is My Blood;" "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood abideth in Me and I in Him."²

The hope, again, of which we have thought as proclaimed by psalmist and prophet was that of blessings which were to pass beyond the Jewish race. The ministry of our Lord was for the most part to the Jews. He Himself

¹ St. Matt. v. 11, 13, 14, 48; vii. 7.

² St. Luke xi. 2, 13; St. John x. 30; St. Matt. xxvi. 26-28; St. John vi. 56.

described its main immediate purpose by saying, "I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."¹ But He gave abundant signs that this was only a temporary stage, and that the effects of His work were to be world-wide. He worked miracles for those outside the chosen race.² He delivered the message of salvation to a woman of Samaria.³ He declared, "Many shall come from the East and the West, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."⁴ He proclaimed that "all the nations" should "be gathered" before the Son of Man when He should "come in His glory," and that to some from among them who had not knowingly served Him He would say, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."⁵ His command to the Church which He left to be His organ in the world was, "Go ye . . . and make disciples of all the nations."⁶ St. John added to the statement that He "should die for the nation" the comment, "and not for

¹ St. Matt. xv. 24.

² St. Matt. viii. 5-13 ; xv. 21-28.

³ St. John iv. 7-26.

⁴ St. Matt. viii. 11.

⁵ St. Matt. xxv. 31, 32, 34.

⁶ St. Matt. xxviii. 19.

the nation only, but that He might also gather together into one the children of God that are scattered abroad."¹ And, as in the Old Testament the belief in the unity of God underlay the anticipation of the gathering together of all nations into the service of God, so the teaching of our Lord is everywhere based on the doctrine that there is one God Who is the Father of men.²

In the second place, our Lord adopted and used the higher teaching which was current among the Jews when He came. The Pharisees and the Essenes taught that doctrine of the personal immortality of the soul upon which the real significance of the present life depends.³ The Pharisees taught also its natural complement, the resurrection of the body.⁴ Our Lord affirmed the resurrection, and with it the great truth that those whom men call dead are still living, and belong to God.⁵ Rabbinic teaching had preserved the negative maxim, "What is hurtful to thee, do not to another."⁶ Our Lord gave it new

¹ St. John xi. 51, 52.

² See, *e.g.*, St. Matt. xxiii. 9.

³ Josephus, "Ant.," XVIII. i. 3, 5; "B. J.," II. viii. 11.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ St. Matt. xxii. 31, 32.

⁶ "Shabbath," 31 *a*. Cf. Edersheim, "Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah," i. 535.

force as a positive precept, "All things . . . whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them."¹ The Essenes forbade those who were members of their community to take oaths.² Our Lord, adopting a Rabbinic phrase,³ taught, "Swear not at all. . . . But let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay."⁴ In the Essene brotherhood rich and poor lived alike with equal position and comfort.⁵ In the Sermon on the Mount our Lord enjoined His disciples: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth;" "Give to him that asketh thee."⁶ The main body of the Essenes was committed to unmarried life.⁷ Our Lord said of celibacy, "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it."⁸

In thus taking and using teaching which was current among the Jews, our Lord gave it a new spirit. To study the best features of the Pharisees, the customs of the Essenes, and the highest Rabbinical utterances is to be

¹ St. Matt. vii. 12.

² Josephus, "B. J.," II. viii. 5.

³ Midrash on Ruth iii. 18.

⁴ St. Matt. v. 34-37.

⁵ Josephus, "Ant.," XVIII. i. 5; "B. J.," II. viii. 3.

⁶ St. Matt. v. 42; vi. 19.

⁷ Josephus, "Ant.," XVIII. i. 5; "B. J.," II. viii. 2.

⁸ St. Matt. xix. 12.

in one atmosphere. To read the Gospels is to be in another. Writers highly favourable to the Essenes and intent on connecting their methods with the teaching of Christ have strongly emphasized differences between them and Him. Thus Dr. Ginsburg has said, "The Essenes . . . were ascetics;" Christ "ate and drank the good things of God, and showed that 'not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man.' They considered themselves ceremonially defiled by contact with any one who practised a lower degree of holiness than their own, and hence had to be recluses. Christ associated with publicans and sinners to redeem them from their evil ways and make them fit for the kingdom of heaven. The Essenes sacrificed the lusts of the flesh to gain spiritual happiness for themselves. Christ sacrificed Himself for the salvation of others. Essenism, by its organization, shut out all but a limited community. Christianity, by breaking down the middle wall of partition, admitted all kindreds and nations and tongues."¹ And to compare in detail the teaching of Christ with the writings of Philo,

¹ Ginsburg in Smith and Wace's "Dictionary of Christian Biography," ii. 203.

a gifted Jew of Alexandria contemporary with Him,¹ is to find similarities of expression and thought which throw into stronger relief what even a writer who greatly exaggerates the resemblances between the sayings of our Lord and those of others has called "the utter dissimilarity of the word and work of each teacher taken as a whole."²

Thirdly, our Lord set right what was perverted in the current teaching of the time. The whole tone of His doctrine implied that the gifts of privilege are not bestowed merely for personal enjoyment, but as a trust to use for others, and thus overthrew the selfish exclusiveness which had come to mark the Jews. He swept away the heartless legalism which had made the keeping of the Sabbath a mockery of God.³ He declared that the fasting which His disciples were to practise was to be joined with inner reality of which the Father who seeth in secret could approve.⁴

¹ For Philo and his teaching, see Schürer, "History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ," II. iii. 321-381; Edersheim in Smith and Wace's "Dictionary of Christian Biography," iv. 357-389; Überweg, "History of Philosophy," i. 224-232.

² K. Cook, "The Fathers of Jesus," ii. 266.

³ St. Matt. xii. 1-13.

⁴ St. Matt. vi. 16-18; ix. 14-17.

In all this our Lord was bringing the true principles of the Jewish religion to their right issues. The Law had been separated from the Prophets, and then itself perverted. He showed the true meaning of the Law, and rejoined it to the Prophets. He came not, He said, "to destroy the Law or the Prophets . . . but to fulfil."¹ He told those who were quick in condemnation of Himself and His disciples that if they had understood the prophetic message, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," they would have been preserved from error and injustice.²

And yet He was rejected by the leaders of the religion of which He was the fulfilment. The teachers and rulers of the Jewish nation, overmastered in some cases by the legalism which was the perversion of the Old Testament, overcome in other cases by the influences which were due to the Roman conquest and occupation, almost universally forgetful of that spirit of prophecy which might have saved them from the wrongs into which they fell, were so blinded that they failed to recognize Him in Whom was to be the realization of the historic hope.

¹ St. Matt. v. 17.

² St. Matt. ix. 13 ; xii. 7.

VI.

In the life and teaching of Christ there was no hostility to institutions of religion. He went up to the Temple,¹ and attended the synagogue service.² He appointed Apostles, and founded a Church.³ He instituted a new rite of Baptism.⁴ He gave powers of government and of remission of sins to those whom He had chosen.⁵ He ordered the observance of the sacred feast in which His Body and His Blood were to be the food.⁶ But He condemned for ever that Judaic spirit which would make institutions into mere formalities, and thus rob them of their inner worth. He showed that the purpose of all which He ordained was to be a means of bringing the soul of man into closer communion with the Father in heaven, to Whom He Himself is recorded to have said, "This is life eternal, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Him Whom Thou didst send." ⁷

¹ St. Luke ii. 41-50; St. John vii. ² St. Luke iv. 16.

³ St. Matt. x. 1-4; St. Mark iii. 14-19; St. Luke ix. 1; St. Matt. xvi. 18.

⁴ St. Matt. xxviii. 19.

⁵ St. Matt. xviii. 18; St. John xx. 22, 23.

⁶ St. Luke xxii. 14-20.

⁷ St. John xvii. 3.

CHRIST AND HEATHENISM

LECTURE II.

CHRIST AND HEATHENISM.

OUR consideration of Christ and Judaism last week led us to see that our Lord recalled the true principles of which the Jewish teaching and methods of His own time had almost, though not entirely, lost sight; and, as part of His work of summing up man into Himself, was the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets.

We have next to consider the relation of our Lord to heathenism, mindful again that this is no mere historical inquiry, but is intimately connected with the value of the work of Him Whom Christians believe to be the Saviour, not of one race or of one century only, but of all mankind.

I.

To turn from Judaism to heathenism is to be struck at first with a great contrast. A

characteristic feature of the Jewish religion was the belief in the unity of God. "Hear, O Israel : the Lord our God is one Lord " ¹ was its dominant note. Another great feature was the assertion of the goodness of God. " I the Lord your God am holy " ² was a truth continually insisted on.

Heathen religions, on the other hand, have, for the most part, been polytheistic. When all proper allowance has been made for exceptions, as in the older forms of the religion of ancient Egypt, ³ it remains true that the ordinary worship of the heathen has been that, not of one God, but of many gods. Heathen religions, also, have been terribly marked by evil. Both in the characters ascribed to the gods and in the practices commanded or permitted in the service of them, immorality has had a very prominent place. Nearly six centuries before Christ the Greek philosopher Xenophanes pointed out that the gods depicted by Homer and Hesiod did all things which men thought shameful ; they stole, they committed adultery,

¹ Deut. vi. 4.

² Lev. xix. 2.

³ See Renouf, "The Origin and Growth of Religion as illustrated by the Religion of Ancient Egypt," pp. 89-92.

they were guilty of treachery.¹ Two centuries later, Plato wrote with scathing contempt of actions ascribed to the gods,² and excluded the poetical accounts of their doings from the system of education to be pursued in his ideal state.³ And there is, perhaps, no more terrible illustration of the perversion of the idea of deity than the way in which great poets, capable of high thought and of expression of surpassing beauty, simply take for granted, as things which are matters of course, the lust and cruelty of the pagan gods.⁴ So, also, in the worship and service of the gods there was the consecration of evil. In many heathen rites, to be a priest or priestess meant to be dedicated to a life of the vilest kind; in many of them the acts by which the worshippers sought the approval of the deity were of the deadliest shame.⁵

There is a side, then, of heathen religion

¹ This and other fragments of Xenophanes are collected in Überweg, "History of Philosophy," i. 52, 53. Cf. Ritter and Preller, "Hist. Phil. Graec. et Rom.," § 82.

² Plato, "Republic," iii. 390 B.C.

³ Ibid., ii. 377-383.

⁴ See Homer and Virgil, *passim*.

⁵ This subject is very fully treated in Döllinger, "The Gentile and the Jew in the Courts of the Temple of Christ."

which is terribly dark. For there is not only the permission of iniquity, but also the recognition of it as found in the gods and commanded to men.

II.

But this is not the only side of the thought and the religious systems of heathenism. From the Christian point of view, we should indeed expect that it would not be the only side. For Christian theology has earnestly maintained that God made man in His own image, and that this divine image, however marred and distorted by sin, is not altogether lost, even in those who have become separated from God. Therefore there remains some power, however weakened, of seeing Divine truth; some power, however weakened, of right thought; some power, however weakened, of good life. Thus St. Justin Martyr, writing in the second century, could say there were some who lived before the Incarnation whose lives had been under the influence of the Word of God—that is, God the Son—and who in truth were Christians, even if they were thought to be atheists; and he was

not afraid to mention as instances, not only Abraham and other Jews, but also Greeks, as Socrates and Heraclitus.¹

The Christian, then, would expect to find in the thought of heathens and in heathen religions some elements not altogether bad. And when the search is made, these higher and better elements are found.

III.

The writings of ancient Greece exhibit an earnest desire to know the truth. One aspect of that desire is illustrated by the relentless cross-examination of every word and thought which is characteristic of the Socrates depicted in the Platonic Dialogues. As there represented, Socrates may not always have a conclusion to suggest ; but at least he will insist that his hearers realize what issues are involved in any discussion—at least he will see what the questions mean, and will not be satisfied with any answer which is superficial or discoverably false. Another aspect of the same desire may be seen in the patient care with which Aristotle collected facts. If he

¹ St. Justin Martyr, "Apol.," i. 46.

had to write on natural science, he used the results of such observation as was possible in his time.¹ If the subject was ethical, he took into account what was seen in actual life.² Before he treated the science of statesmanship, he made that great record and analysis of the constitutions of one hundred and fifty-eight states an important part of which became known to us, through explorations in Egypt, some years ago.³ Another

¹ See Aristotle's various works on natural science. Cf. "Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley," i. 481, "Whether that doctrine [*i.e.* of evolution] be true or whether it be false, I wish to express the deliberate opinion, that from Aristotle's great summary of the biological knowledge of his time down to the present day, there is nothing comparable to the 'Origin of Species,' as a connected survey of the phenomena of life permeated and vivified by a central idea;" ii. 2, "His own estimate of Aristotle as a physiologist is between the panegyric of Cuvier and the depreciation of Lewes, 'he carried science a step beyond the point at which he found it; a meritorious, but not a miraculous, achievement.'" See also a letter in "The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin," iii. 251, 252, "From quotations which I had seen, I had a high notion of Aristotle's merits, but I had not the most remote notion what a wonderful man he was. Linnæus and Cuvier have been my two gods, though in very different ways, but they were mere schoolboys to old Aristotle."

² See Aristotle, "Eth. Nic."

³ See Kenyon, "Aristotle on the Constitution of Athens."

aspect is in the calm study of human life which marks the Homeric poems, and yet another in the persistent effort to solve moral problems which is found in the tragedians. In Homer, the battles round Troy or the wanderings of Odysseus have their interest for the poet as well as for the reader far more as the record of them is an attempt to show the effect of circumstance on character and of character on circumstance than as mere history or legend. When the dramatist Æschylus represented Prometheus chained to a rock and suffering continual and awful pain by the decree of Zeus because he had dared to benefit mankind,¹ and Agamemnon struck dead in his hour of triumph because of the hereditary curse upon his house,² he was far less intent on helping an audience to spend a holiday than on contributing his share to the solution of the problems of life and death. When Sophocles portrayed the sorrows of Œdipus as the results, not of voluntary misdoings, but of unknown sins into which destiny had driven him,³ and

¹ Æschylus, "Prometheus Vincetus."

² Idem, "Agamemnon."

³ Sophocles, "Œdipus Tyrannus."

Antigone proclaiming the supremacy of the unwritten laws of natural duty over any enactment of a state,¹ he too was doing what he could to search for truth. And if Euripides failed to reach the heights to which Æschylus and Sophocles attained,² there is, none the less, in his plays an undertone of questioning which seeks to learn a theory to account for facts which are well known. In this work of Greek thought there is unflinching honesty. "In their dealings with all these subjects," wrote Mr. Ruskin, referring to Homer, but in words which are more widely applicable, "the Greeks never shrink from horror ; down to its uttermost depth, to its most appalling physical detail, they strive to sound the secrets of sorrow. . . . Whether there be consolation for them or not, neither apathy nor blindness shall be their saviour : if for them, thus knowing the facts of the grief of earth, any hope, relief, or triumph may hereafter seem possible,—well ; but if not, still hopeless, reliefless, eternal, the sorrow

¹ Sophocles, "Antigone," especially 450-455.

² Keble's judgment of Sophocles, however, is less favourable than that expressed above : see his "Prælectiones Academicæ," pp. 561-582. For his opinion about Euripides, see *ibid.*, pp. 583-610.

shall be met face to face.”¹ “The Greeks,” said Professor Butcher, “before any other people of antiquity, possessed the love of knowledge for its own sake. To see things as they really are, to discern their meanings and adjust their relations, was with them an instinct and a passion. Their methods in science and philosophy might be very faulty, and their conclusions often absurd, but they had that fearlessness of intellect which is the first condition of seeing truly. Poets and philosophers alike looked with unflinching eye on all that met them, on man and the world, on life and death. They interrogated Nature, and sought to wrest her secret from her, without misgiving and without after-thought.”²

In the writings of the Greeks there is at once the earnest desire to know the truth and the failure to reach what is satisfying to the mind. When Æschylus³ and Euripides⁴ refer to the chief deity as “Zeus, whoever he be,” or when Euripides describes the same

¹ Ruskin, “Modern Painters,” v. 215.

² Butcher, “Some Aspects of the Greek Genius,” pp. 1, 2.

³ Æschylus, “Agam.,” 155.

⁴ Euripides, “Herc. Fur.,” 1263 ; “Troad.,” 885 ; “Fragm. Melanip.,” 1.

deity as "either the necessity of nature or the mind of mortal men,"¹ or when Plato says "about the gods we know nothing,"² they reveal the dissatisfaction which permeates Greek thought.

IV.

The searching inquiries of the Greek thinkers struck upon ideas of profound significance. To mention the most important of all, the condemnation by the philosopher Xenophanes of current teaching about the gods was associated with the assertion that God is one,³ and this conception of unity was not without influence on later systems of philosophy. Even popular beliefs about the gods, some of which seem to us repulsive or grotesque, were signs of yearnings which lay very deep in men's minds. In the Homeric poems, the constant interpositions of the gods in human affairs form a prominent feature. As Alexander, the favourite of Aphrodite, is being dragged to his death by his helmet, the

¹ Euripides, "Troad.," 886. ² Plato, "Crat.," 400 D.

³ See Überweg, "History of Philosophy," i. 51-53; Schwegler, "History of Philosophy," p. 16.

goddess breaks the strap which held it, so that he may escape, and to secure him from further attack surrounds him with a mist and takes him away from the field of battle.¹ As Odysseus is drawing near on his raft to the land from which there is hope that he may return to his home, he is wrecked by a storm brought upon him by the god Poseidon ;² by a gift from Ino, formerly a mortal maiden who had become a goddess, he is enabled to swim to shore ;³ through the acts and counsel of Athene and the response of the river-god to his prayer, it is made possible for him to land.⁴ Whatever else such statements may imply, they certainly show a wistful looking for a providential rule of a power higher than human.

Sacrifice filled an important place in Greek life. It had some aspects which were cruel, and others which were trivial. It was often open to the scoff of the later Greek writer Lucian that the gods sell their gifts to men, so that health can be bought for a bull calf,

¹ Homer, *Iliad*, iii. 369-382.

² Idem, "*Od.*," v. 282-332.

³ *Ibid.*, 333-372, 458-462.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 382-387, 424-453.

and riches for four oxen, and a kingdom for a hecatomb.¹ But there was in it also the conception of the power of dedication, and a yearning for atonement and communion with the divine being; and there are not wanting instances of willingness to suffer of great pathos and beauty, as when, in a play of Euripides, the maiden Iphigenia, claimed by the goddess Artemis as the fairest of earth's creatures of her age, is represented as gladly making surrender of her own young life with a noble self-devotion, that she may benefit her country.²

Deeply embedded in Greek belief and life was the system by which practical advice and prophecies about the future were given by the oracles at the sacred shrines. When all the facts known to us on this subject have been examined, it is impossible to find one explanation which may account for them all. Some of the oracular responses were merely common sense; others of them were so ambiguous that, whatever happened, it could probably be said that they had been fulfilled;

¹ Lucian, "De Sacrificiis."

² Euripides, "Iph. in Aul.," 1368-1509, especially 1378-1386, 1397, 1421, 1447, 1473, 1474, 1502, 1503.

others of them may have been due to information secretly obtained by the priests of the shrine ; some appear to have been falsified by events ; in others there may have been some element of the marvellous.¹ But, whatever the complete explanation of them may be, the existence and use of these oracles at least testify to a yearning to receive divine guidance, the desire for a voice from heaven.

In the solemn rites known as the mysteries there appear to have been three great elements. There was the purification of the worshipper by confession of sin, fasting, and bathing in water. There was the offering of sacrifice. There were the mystic plays which represented the changes of the seasons of the year and the symbols of human life.² In all this, there was the underlying testimony to the desire of man to hold communion with the deity, and to the need of his being cleansed from his unworthiness that he might be able to do so.

Very various are the ideas about the future

¹ There is very much of interest and value on this subject in F. W. H. Myer's article "Greek Oracles" in "Hellenica," pp. 425-492.

² See Hatch, "The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church," pp. 283-290.

life found in Greek literature. The theological beliefs assumed by Homer represent the departed as still possessing a life really continuous with that which they lived on earth, but so shadowy and sad that Achilles, though "a great ruler among the dead," can say to Odysseus, "Rather would I live on earth¹ and be the serf of another, of a landless man whose means are small, than bear sway among all the dead that have perished."² Early in the fifth century before Christ, the lyric poet Pindar described in splendid verse the happiness after death of those who had lived stainless lives on earth, the misery of the wicked, and the restoration to earthly life of those who had sinned, but had been set free from guilt.³ Plato asserted by carefully reasoned arguments the immortality of the soul, but appears to have been baffled by the thought of what the future life might be like.⁴

¹ Or, "bound to the soil," *ἐπάουπος*.

² Homer, "Od.," xi. 485, 489-491.

³ Pindar, "Olym.," ii. 56-88; "Thren. Fragm.," 3, 4 (Donaldson).

⁴ Plato, "Phædo," *passim*; "Rep.," x. 608 D-611 B; "Tim.," 41 D-44 C; "Symp.," 206 E-209 A; "Phædr.," 245 C-246 A. Cf. Überweg, "History of Philosophy," i. 127, 128; Schwegler, "History of Philosophy," pp. 83-86.

In the system of Aristotle, the reason, which he declared to be immortal, was so far separated from the rest of the nature of man that the immortality which he taught was hardly a truly continuous life.¹ Yet, in all these lines of thought, as distinct from any which denied altogether a future existence, there was to be seen a yearning for a real immortality.

Among the Greeks there was much appreciation of goodness. When Plato lays down as a fundamental principle that "God is not the author of everything, but of good only,"² and insists that every form of falsehood is impossible for God,³ he is bearing his testimony to the universal obligation of the law of righteousness. Homer and the great dramatists concur in showing instances and appreciation of patient gentleness, unwearying fidelity, real goodness.⁴

¹ Aristotle, "De gen. animal.," ii. 3; "De anim.," ii. 2. Cf. Überweg, *ibid.*, i. 168, 169; Schwegler, *ibid.*, pp. 114, 115.

² Plato, "Rep." ii. 380 C.

³ *Ibid.* 381 E-383 C.

⁴ See Homer, "Odyssey," *passim*; Sophocles, "Œdipus Coloneus."

There are other signs of a good life among the Greeks. We may compare with them those elements of robustness, of stern and uncompromising virtue, of devotion to duty, found at some periods among the Romans. In Roman poetry, too, there were elements greatly resembling, and to a large extent borrowed from, the features of Greek poetry which we have noticed. The frequency of divine interposition, for instance, and the desire to penetrate the unseen world where the souls of the dead are placed, may be observed in Virgil¹ as in Homer. In the writings of Seneca, a contemporary of St. Paul, and in the teaching of the Stoics of the second century of the Christian era, there were philosophic thoughts and moral maxims which reached a very high level.²

Yet we must remember that among both Greeks and Romans there were plague-spots of vice, at which it is not well we should do more than glance, which may be seen in what is best and highest, with that strange

¹ See Virgil, "*Æneid*," especially i. and vi.

² There is a very valuable essay on this subject in Lightfoot, "*St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*," pp. 270-333.

mixture which is one of the puzzles of life, corrupting art and degrading literature and debasing philosophic thought.

V.

Of late years great advance has been made in the study of what is known as "folk-lore."¹ The worship of nature and of natural powers, the seeking of communion with unseen beings by means of sacrifices, sometimes strange and often terrible, have been found to prevail very widely among peoples of the most different kinds. Here, too, there is a mixture of good and evil, parallel to some extent to a feature we have already noticed in the life and thought of the Greeks and Romans. There is much that is kindly and beautiful which appeals to high instincts we ourselves feel. There is much also the horror of which is appalling.

¹ The most remarkable work on this subject is perhaps Frazer, "The Golden Bough." The first edition of this book was published in 1890, the second and greatly enlarged edition at the end of 1900. The student should also consult Jevons, "An Introduction to the History of Religion."

VI.

The Vedas and the Zendavesta are the books of the ancient religions of India and the Parsees. Perhaps the most striking feature of the Vedas is the sense that the material things of which the senses are cognisant are the veils of what is greater than themselves. The fire, the water, the heaven, the sea, the mountains, are the work and manifestation of the Source and Lord of all things. In beautiful language the dawn is described as if a personal being. The whole created world is viewed as the organ and utterance of a divine power. As to the nature of that divine power no clear answer is suggested. At one moment, He appears to be regarded as independent of and altogether transcending that which men's eyes behold. At another moment, some phenomenon of nature seems to be viewed as if itself divine. At one time, the language of worship appears to be addressed to one who cannot be other than the only God. At another time, what seem to be other beings are called upon in words of no less reverence and awe. But amid all this uncertainty

there is one thing clear: the universe is greater than that which can be seen and felt; and behind all of which the senses tell is what gives meaning to the whole.

The Book of the Zendavesta, which lacks the astonishing beauty found in the Vedas, and contains much which is unattractive, is marked by a strong sense of the solemnity of life, and of that continual battle between good and evil which led Zoroaster to the theory of two co-ordinate and eternal principles, the God of good and the Power of evil, and the religion at the bottom of which, with all its splendid insistence on truth and right, was what Dean Church well called "the poison-root of a dual Divinity."¹

It is impossible for us, in the time at our disposal, either to consider at length the elements in the Vedas and the Zendavesta which have been referred to, or to dwell on instances of their weaknesses and their failure to satisfy. It must be sufficient for our present purpose to gather from them the two thoughts of the yearning for the divine to which the contemplation of the natural world

¹ Church, "The Gifts of Civilization," p. 382.

led, and of the recognition of life as a field of battle.¹

VII.

The ancient religion of India, of which the oldest Vedas formed the sacred book, was superseded by the later Brahmanism. Hence arose the Hindu cult of the three deities of Brahma, the creator; Vishnu, the preserver and maintainer; and Siva, the destroyer, who, though they may be thus distinguished and described, had nevertheless interchangeable functions and characters of the most complex kind.² To them were added a number of inferior deities; and an elaborate system, including an organized priesthood and various degrees of caste, took the place of the simpler methods of the older religion. Among the characteristic doctrines of Hinduism were that of the series of incarnations by which the god Vishnu, for various purposes, entered into different forms of created life,³ and that of the

¹ For the study of the Eastern religions in general, there are most valuable materials in the series entitled "The Sacred Books of the East."

² See M. M. Williams, "Hinduism," p. 87.

³ For a list of the "ten principal incarnations" of Vishnu, see *ibid.* pp. 104-108.

transmigration of the eternal soul through an innumerable succession of bodies. With these principles, Hinduism has developed in the most widely different directions, and a great authority has said of it in its modern forms : "Hinduism has something to offer suited to all minds. Its strength lies in its infinite adaptability. It has its esoteric, abstract phase, suited to the metaphysical philosopher; its purely spiritual phase, suited to the intellectual and contemplative; its exoteric, practical phase, suited to the man of action; its emotional phase, suited to the man of feeling; its ritualistic phase, suited to lovers of external forms; its ascetical phase, suited to lovers of seclusion and believers in the efficacy of self-mortification; its idolatrous phase, suited to the ignorant and illiterate; and, I am sorry to add, its sensual phase, suited to the voluptuary and impure-minded votary of licentious pleasures. It holds out the right hand of fellowship to nature-worshippers, animal-worshippers, spirit-worshippers, demon-worshippers, devil-worshippers, fetish-worshippers." ¹

¹ Idem in "Official Report of the Missionary Conference of the Anglican Communion, 1894," p. 96.

Buddhism was an attempt at a reformation of Brahmanism. Its founder, Gautama, among whose many titles was that of Sakya-muni, the sage of the tribe of the Sakyas, and who came to be known as the Buddha, or the enlightened one, was born probably about five centuries before the Christian era. When he was twenty-eight years old, he left the greatness and luxury of his father's house to become a wandering ascetic. After much self-mortification, he reached, it is said, that enlightenment which made him the Buddha at the age of thirty-five. From that time until his death, at the age of eighty, he devoted himself to the propagation of his new religion and to religious meditation.

There is very much that is attractive both in the personal history of the Buddha and in the system of thought which was his work. Twenty-eight years ago, the genius of Dr. Liddon described his life. "Here," he said, "is a young man, born in a happy time, born of a just and generous father and a loving mother, cradled in wealth and luxury, welcomed to life by all that it has best to offer

in the way of outward advantages, the heir of a noble name, the heir of a throne. He is virtuous ; he is intellectual ; he is good-looking ; he is popular ; he marries a young wife who is also pre-eminently beautiful and good ; life opens on him, as far as outward blessings go, with all the glow and splendour of an Eastern morning. But his happiness is poisoned by the spectacle of sufferings around him, which are too great, too many, too rooted in the fixed conditions of human life, to admit of his relieving them. . . . His thoughts, his studies, his enthusiasms are thus grounded in a most unselfish and generous impulse ; and when he renounces his home and his crown, his wealth and his power, to become a beggar and a solitary, to meditate, amid self-imposed hardships, upon the ultimate secrets of human destiny, we do perhaps better in admiring the loftiness of his motive than in wondering at the results of his career." ¹

Such was the personal character of the Buddha. In his religious system, a prominent element was its high morality. The foundation of this morality was in what were

¹ Liddon, " *Essays and Addresses*," pp. 28, 29.

called the "four truths" of the "law" or "doctrine of the wheel." They were that (1) where there is life, there is pain; (2) pain is caused by desire; (3) release from pain depends upon the cessation of desire; (4) the cessation of desire is to be obtained by following the eight paths of right vision, right resolve, right speech, right work, right living, right exercise, right mindfulness, and right meditation. Of these eight paths, the first four were applicable to all men; the last four were for ascetics only. In each case the words used had a technical sense which to a considerable extent limited their meaning. For instance, right meditation denoted the trance-like quietude of the Buddhist monk.¹ There were prohibitions and enactments of a good kind, as the prohibition of theft and adultery and lying, and the injunctions to benevolence and patience. Indeed, the moral teaching of some parts of Buddhism is such that it has even been a popular theory that the higher elements of the Christian religion were derived from Buddhist teachers—a theory which, so great an authority as Dr. Rhys Davids has told

¹ See M. M. Williams, "Buddhism," pp. 44, 45.

us, is shown to be untenable by historical facts.¹

This brief outline may suffice to give an idea of the merits and the capacities of the religion of the Buddha. It remains to add that in Buddhism as a system, there is no God ; there are innumerable trivialities of a repulsive kind ; human life is regarded as a thing to be crushed rather than to be used ; and there has failed to be an abiding living power.

As has been lately said by a competent writer of long observation and ripe judgment, "The names of Zoroaster, Confucius, the Hindu Sages, and Buddha, will ever stand out in history as bright luminaries. We stretch out our hands across the abyss of centuries to thank and bless them. Their religious conceptions have fallen into decay ;

¹ Rhys Davids, "Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as illustrated by some Points in the History of Indian Buddhism," pp. 151, 152. Cf. two letters of great interest by Dr. Rhys Davids which, together with two letters from Cardinal Newman, are printed in W. S. Lilly, "The Claims of Christianity," pp. 25-36. See also a careful treatment of this subject in Aiken, "The Dhamma of Gotama the Buddha and the Gospel of Jesus the Christ." The representation of the Buddha in Sir Edwin Arnold's beautiful poem, "The Light of Asia," is misleading. On the misconceptions which result from using Christian language to describe Buddhist ideas, see Rhys Davids in Lilly, *ibid.*, p. 35.

they are being crushed out in consequence of the contact of secluded nations with the outer world and the universal civilization of the nineteenth century, and because they were wrong in their essentials." ¹

VIII.

To enter at length into other heathen religions would be to find in them too often the deification of cruelty and deceit and lust, together with at least the permission of immorality and other wrongs ; and yet to recognize here and there strains of a true nobility, as when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, six centuries before Christ, addressed Merodach his god in terms of earnest self-dedication,² or when, in more recent times, the

¹ Cust, "Essay on the most Wonderful Phenomenon of the Closing Century," p. 13.

² The inscription referred to is translated as follows in Sayce, "Babylonians and Assyrians," pp. 262, 263 : "To Merodach my lord I prayed ; I began to him my petition ; the word of my heart sought him, and I said : O prince, thou that art from everlasting, lord of all that exists, for the king whom thou lovest, whom thou callest by name, as it seems good unto thee, thou guidest his name aright, thou watchest over him in the path of righteousness ! I, the prince who obeys thee, am the work of thy hands ; thou hast created me and hast entrusted to me the sovereignty

Kaffir has prayed that he may go away from "the double-hearted men" to "the one-hearted man."¹

And to the recognition of these two sides in many heathen religions, the yearning for what is noble and the consecration of what is base, it is necessary to add some consideration of the element of deterioration frequently found, of which one of the most terrible instances is in the feast of Jagan-nath, commonly known to us as Juggernaut, in which what was originally a commemoration of the ascetic and gentle Buddha passed into an exhibition of obscenity and cruelty of the vilest kind.²

over multitudes of men, according to thy goodness, O lord, which thou hast made to pass over them all. Let me love thy supreme lordship, let the fear of thy divinity exist in my heart, and give what seemeth good unto thee, since thou maintainest my life." It is translated also in Driver, "The Book of Daniel" (Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges), p. xxvi.

¹ "Guide me, O Hawk !
That I may go heavenward,
To seek the one-hearted man,
Away from the double-hearted men,
Who deal in blessing and cursing."

See Wordsworth, "The One Religion," p. 35.

² See Rhys Davids, "Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as illustrated by some Points in the History of Indian Buddhism," pp. 32, 33.

IX.

Turning to the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us notice, in the first place, that He swept away the evils of heathenism. The God whom He reveals is one God, not many gods. "This is life eternal, that they should know Thee, the only true God."¹ He is a God of holiness and of kindly love. He can be addressed as Father.² "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust."³ He is not to be served by an insistence on trifles and a neglect of principles. There is stern condemnation for those who strain out the gnat and swallow the camel.⁴ His worshippers are bidden aim at a righteousness so complete that they are to put away angry and scornful words as well as deeds of murder,⁵ lustful desires as well as actual adultery,⁶ rash use of the name of God as well as perjury.⁷

As the Lord Jesus Christ swept away the evils of heathenism, so also He provided for the satisfaction of those yearnings which form

¹ St. John xvii. 3.² St. Matt. vi. 9 ; St. Luke xi. 2.³ St. Matt. v. 45.⁴ St. Matt. xxiii. 24.⁵ St. Matt. v. 21-23.⁶ St. Matt. v. 27-30.⁷ St. Matt. v. 33-37.

so remarkable a part of much heathen thought. The mind of the Greek longed for truth with a desire and a pathos which, all these centuries after, are impressive to a degree which few things in literature reach. St. John teaches that "truth came through Jesus Christ,"¹ and records that our Lord "said to those Jews which had believed Him," "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."² The Greek imagined a kindly providence of the gods even at the cost of malevolent interpositions. It is the teaching of Christ that the birds of the heaven, and the lilies of the field, and much more human beings, are a continual care to God.³ The Greek dimly saw the need of atonement for sin and communion with God, and the power of willing sacrifice. To make atonement, to unite men to God, to Himself willingly suffer, were the very purposes of our Lord's life. The Greek, realizing as few have realized the splendid capacities of human life, wondered what became of them when they seemed to be destroyed in death. Our Lord, if He said little about the future state, taught much in

¹ St. John i. 17.² St. John viii. 31, 32.³ St. Matt. vi. 25-34.

that little ; for He declared, as was pointed out in the last lecture, that the dead are living beings who belong to God.¹

The Parsee viewed life as a battle-field ; the Buddhist demanded a religion in which patient goodness had its place. Our Lord Jesus Christ warned His disciples of the need of conflict² and sacrifice,³ of the sword He came to send,⁴ of loss of life for His sake,⁵ of the cutting off of hand or foot for those who would not stumble,⁶ of the narrow door by which His disciples must strive to enter in.⁷ He enforced also that principle of the suppression of self which the Buddhist ideal had distorted. For this, surely, is the true meaning of the words, "To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other."⁸

The Hindu yearned for that union between God and the created world which he found at one time in Pantheistic ideas, and at another time in the incarnations of Vishnu. The life of our Lord was a true and perfect

¹ St. Matt. xxii. 31, 32.

³ St. Matt. viii. 19-22.

⁵ St. Mark viii. 35.

⁷ St. Luke xiii. 24.

² St. Luke xxii. 36.

⁴ St. Matt. x. 34.

⁶ St. Mark ix. 43, 45.

⁸ St. Luke vi. 29.

human life ; and yet St. John records that He said, " I and the Father are one." ¹

The desire for communion with God, the sense of the need of atonement, which the students of "folk-lore" have shown to us all over the world, are, as we have already seen, satisfied in Christ.

And so it may be said without straining and without exaggeration, that in the life and teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ there were those good things for which the heathen had yearned, no less than the condemnation of those evil things which the heathen had allowed.

¹ St. John x. 30.

CHRIST AND MODERN
THOUGHT

LECTURE III.

CHRIST AND MODERN THOUGHT.

IN the first two lectures of this series we have considered the relation of the Lord Jesus Christ to Judaism and to heathenism. And, if I have been able to carry you with me at all in the conclusions of these lectures, we have seen that our Lord recalled and carried on to their true issues the great principles of the Jewish religion which Jewish teachers had to a large extent perverted and set aside ; and that, while rebuking the evils of heathenism, He supplied that for which better heathen thought had longed.

It is inevitable that, if we are considering the place of our Lord in human life, we should go on to a further question. It is much that He was able to speak words which were needed to the men of his own race and time, and other words, not less needed, to

the devotees of the great heathen religions. That He has done so may give us grounds of hope that He may help us too. But we naturally go on to the definite inquiry, Does He speak also to the people of to-day? Is He the Teacher, not only of past ages and of lines of thought other than our own, but also of the men who, with their eyes open and their minds active, have passed from the nineteenth century into the twentieth?

I.

As we make this inquiry we are, of course, conscious that the present age has its imperfections, and that the thought of any particular time is quickly discredited. A writer of genius, very far removed from beliefs generally known as orthodox, himself the disciple and the teacher of nineteenth-century thought, the late Professor William Wallace, of Oxford, has suggested that a later age may consider the ideas of the nineteenth century as "pretentious and absurd" as the fashions of dress of thirty years ago seem to

us "unnatural" or "quaint."¹ And, if we have faced the facts which may be observed all down the course of human history, we must be prepared to acknowledge that much in our own age may call for rebuke, as well as that the age has real needs.

The future historian of nineteenth-century thought will have to make allowance for a great wave of pessimism. There have been thinkers who have seriously maintained that the life which we live is in reality an evil thing, and that it would be better for us if we did not exist; and the influence of such ideas, even among those who do not know of or would not accept the philosophy which underlies them, has been considerable. Let me give two instances of teaching which may be called pessimistic, both of them from outside England, which I select because they are distinguished examples of the philosophy, in the one case of the first half, in the other case of the second half, of the last century. Arthur Schopenhauer was born at Danzig in 1789. Much of his youth was spent in France and England. In 1809 he entered

¹ W. Wallace, "Lectures and Essays on Natural Theology and Ethics," pp. 134, 135.

the University of Göttingen, and devoted himself thenceforward to the close study of philosophy. He died in 1860. Friedrich Nietzsche was born in 1844, when Schopenhauer was still working at the elaboration of his philosophy. From 1872 onwards he attracted attention as a brilliant thinker ; in 1889 his bodily and mental powers failed ; in 1900 he died.

In the philosophy of Schopenhauer, misery is inseparable from human life. To take a favourable view of existence is to be tricked by illusion. That which is best for man is extinction. For the outcome of the system is that "life is will, and will is effort, and effort is pain."¹

In the writings of Nietzsche conflicting ideas compete with one another in rich profusion, and there are not wanting anticipations of a golden future ; but his philosophy is essentially pessimistic in the contentions that human life hitherto has been dominated by illusions, that the obstacle to human progress is human goodness, and that an irrevocable past has laid the

¹ Liddon, "Sermons preached before the University of Oxford," second series, p. 341.

spell of its bondage upon a present which ever recurs.¹

A wholly different aspect of the pessimistic spirit, manifested in England in the early years of the nineteenth century, may be seen in those poems of Lord Byron which are marked alike by splendid genius and by detestable morality.

To pessimism in all its forms the teaching of our Lord is strongly opposed. He recognizes indeed,—nay, He is at pains to emphasize,—that will must be used and braced; that effort must be constantly made; that, in the pursuit of the true objects of life, pain must be gladly borne. There is no room in His teaching for that shallow optimism which, in reaction from pessimism, imagines that all human life must eventually be brought to a successful issue, whatever be done with it, and that the goodness of God secures that,

¹ There is a brilliant essay on Nietzsche's "Thus spake Zarathustra" in W. Wallace, "Lectures and Essays on Natural Theology and Ethics," pp. 530-541. The essay has a melancholy interest as having been the latest thing written by Professor Wallace before the terrible accident which caused his death in February, 1897. An old pupil may be allowed to express with gratitude his sense of the earnestness and justice, as well as the remarkable power, of Professor Wallace's mind.

under all conditions and circumstances, it is well with the world. But the whole tone of His words implies that it is worth while to brace the will, to make effort, to bear pain ; that, when all the dark sides have been acknowledged and faced, life is still a good thing, a high gift from the all-wise and all-holy God, the means to the reception of permanent and eternal blessing.

It is impossible in any review of the thought of recent years to ignore the fact that in some quarters vice has been glorified. A French writer, who died in 1872, who compared the Christian ideal of purity with the Greek personification of self-indulgence, to the advantage of the latter, and spoke of the most dishonourable forms of immorality as innocent and unimportant, is still widely read and apparently influential ; and has been recognized, outside as well as within France, as a teacher of true views of beauty and life. In England we have seen a phase of thought which has imagined that by being vicious it might become classical, and that it could attain to Hellenic beauty by the cultivation of pagan vice, which has laid its polluting touch on thought and literature and life,

diverting art from its true ideals, representing the perversion of nature as if it were nature itself, degrading and defiling the idea of love.

Upon such theories the condemnation of our Lord has been stamped. The French writer to whom I have referred could call adultery harmless. Our Lord affirmed in the clearest language the sanctity of the marriage bond.¹ The English school of thought I have had in view has welcomed that which is sensual. Our Lord insisted on the evil inseparably connected with the indulgence of impure desires, and declared, "Blessed are the pure in heart."²

The historian of nineteenth century thought, again, will have to deal with the idea that all religions are natural developments, and that religion itself has been evolved from magic. The growth of such opinions has been promoted by books of great industry and power, of the ability shown in which it is needful to speak with respect. The writings of Mr. Herbert Spencer and the researches of younger students of "folk-lore"³ have made

¹ St. Matt. v. 27-32 ; xix. 3-9 ; St. Mark x. 2-12 ; St. Luke xvi. 18.

² St. Matt. v. 8.

³ See note on p. 51.

us intimately acquainted with whole groups of facts of which a century and less ago accomplished scholars had very little idea. The study of comparative religion has made enormous strides in our own time. And with it have come new forms of the theories, either that all religions are alike delusions, or that all religions are equally true.

This third phase of thought, like the other two which we have noticed, is in distinct opposition to the teaching of our Lord. There is nothing, indeed, in what He taught inconsistent with a belief that outside Judaism and outside Christianity God left not Himself without witness, and that the image of God in which all men share has the power of receiving and reflecting Divine truth. But He assumed that the Jewish race had been the recipient of a Divine revelation;¹ He promised that the Holy Ghost would guide His apostles into all the truth;² He declared that the gates of hades should not prevail against the Church which He was to build.³ Such teaching is in harmony with the general impression of our Lord's life conveyed by

¹ See, *e.g.*, St. Matt. xv. 3-6.

² St. John xvi. 13.

³ St. Matt. xvi. 18.

the Gospels, and it is inconsistent with any idea either of equality among religions or of the Christian religion being other than a revealed faith.

So far, then, as modern thought is pessimistic, or glorifies vice, or ignores the reality of revelation, it falls under the condemnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But it may be doubted whether any one of these three positions has had a really strong hold on the general thought of our day. The sense, to which we must recur later, that God exists and that God is good, has kept a powerful grasp on the minds of men. With it is bound up a conviction that the God who is good reveals Himself to mankind, and that His explicit revelation is to be found in the Christian religion. The same sense carries with it the rejection of any condoning of sensual life. It affirms, also, that those pessimistic ideas which are inconsistent with the rule of a good God cannot be true. And indeed pessimism has been rejected by some who have been very full of the modern spirit. The German poet Goethe, who was born in 1749 and died in 1832, was in some ways a pioneer of those

conceptions of life which have been widely influential in the century which ended three weeks ago. If in his writings there is much the tendency of which is in the direction of gloom, he certainly definitely rejected the pessimistic view ; for in the splendid ending of the second part of "Faust" he depicts the powers of evil which had seemed to be triumphant as being discomfited, and declares that the striving of the will set on penitence, enabled by the love of God, can lead to pardon and blessedness even those who have sinned most deeply, and failed to meet aright the issues of life.¹

II.

The nineteenth century has been a time of much patient investigation and study of facts. There has been to a very real extent a quest for truth. Some of the old passion of the Greeks to know and face the realities of life has had place among ourselves. To

¹ Goethe, "Faust," part ii. act v. There is an interesting sentence in a letter by Professor Huxley, "The wealth of superfluous loveliness in the world condemns pessimism : " see "*Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley*," ii. 134.

take as instances three great Englishmen, there have been few names in all history more closely connected with the accurate study of facts than those of Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, and Thomas Henry Huxley. Certainly, to examine their methods of work is itself an education. Their industry, their patience, the pains taken by them to ascertain and rightly group facts even in subordinate, and at first sight insignificant, departments of research are simply marvellous. Their love of truth, indeed, may not be spoken of without qualification. It must be impossible for many, I think,—at least, it is impossible for myself,—to be without a sense of pain on finding that, in Darwin, the unwearying student of Nature allowed some of his faculties to become atrophied through disuse;¹ that, in Spencer, there was

¹ See "The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin," i. 101, 102: "My mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts, but why this should have caused the atrophy of that part of the brain alone, on which the higher tastes depend, I cannot conceive. . . . If I had to live my life again, I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once every week; for perhaps the parts of my brain now atrophied would thus have been kept active through use. The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness, and

blindness to whole groups of facts as real and as imperatively calling for notice as those which he most patiently examined;¹ that, in Huxley, the mind which in the work it made pre-eminently its own was magnificently earnest could at times condescend to be trivial and trifling in dealing with matters which, even if they should not be solemn verities, would, at any rate, be most solemn questions.² Yet, when all the needed qualifications have been made, it remains true that, in the instances I have mentioned—and they are instances which are illustrative of a whole trend of thought,—the nineteenth century has seen a real pursuit of truth.

Closely connected with this pursuit has been the recognition of those darker sides of life one outcome of which has been the

may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and more probably to the moral character, by enfeebling the emotional part of our nature."

¹ The allusion is to the spiritual facts involved in prayer and communion with God. On subjects of this kind, there is much of very high value in J. R. Reynolds, "Essays and Addresses."

² There is a painful instance in "Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley," i. 223. Other instances will occur to those acquainted with Professor Huxley's writings. On the other hand, the sense painfully lacking in the letter in i. 223, is marked in that in ii. 18, of the "Life."

pessimism of which we have already thought. And, as it seems to me, this recognition has been one of the chief causes of unrest and mental pain. It is not wonderful if it has been so. In the words of a living writer, Mr. W. S. Lilly, "What question is there which presses upon any one who really tries to face it with such overwhelming severity as the question of the moral government of the world? Yes, as Descartes said, 'God must transcend in excellence my highest idea of excellence.' . . . How reconcile with that absolute goodness the suffering of a moment's pain by any living creature? How reconcile with it the existence of the 'purblind race of miserable men'?"¹ The "suffering of a moment's pain by any living creature," says Mr. Lilly. But that, we are always being reminded, and as Mr. Lilly would of course recognize, is not the problem. The problem is rather in the suffering which, in its manifold forms, is almost universal; in the disappointment of high hopes; in the seeming waste of power and goodness; in the seeming absence of purpose; in the

¹ W. S. Lilly, "Ancient Religion and Modern Thought," p. 258.

scourging of tender souls just where they are most sensitive; in the possession of faculties of which it is felt that the higher they are, the more pain they bring. This is the problem which has been voiced by poets of our day. Tennyson, in a well-known passage in "In Memoriam" has written of—

"Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine."¹

Browning has placed in the mouth of an objector to truths commonly held the words—

" 'No sign,' groaned he,
'No stirring of God's finger to denote
He wills that right should have supremacy
On earth, not wrong! How helpful could we quote
But one poor instance where He interposed
Promptly and surely and beyond mistake
Between oppression and its victim, closed
Accounts with sin for once, and bade us wake
From our long dream that justice bears no sword,
Or else forgets whereto its sharpness serves.'"²

The pursuit of truth, again, has brought

¹ Tennyson, "In Memoriam," lvi. Cf. "Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley," ii. 134, "If our ears were sharp enough to hear all the cries of pain that are uttered in the earth by men and beasts, we should be deafened by one continuous scream."

² R. Browning, "Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in their Day: Bernard de Mandeville," iii.

the recognition of the reign of law. Such different influences as the science of Darwin and the philosophy of Hegel, the German thinker who died in 1831, have concurred in emphasizing the universality of law's domain. The growth of ideas, the sequences of thought, the formation of constitutions and societies, the round of daily life, have all been seen to be marked by the rule of law and to bear the impress of orderly development. In nature, in morals, in politics, this reign of law has been traced out by master hands.

And in some the conception of law has had a pessimistic influence. For one idea connected with it is that of inevitableness. Nature, it has sometimes been pointed out, pardons no mistake. Here is the force of the sombre verses in which Dante Gabriel Rossetti pictures the "lost days" of life as remaining "each one a murdered self" "to all eternity."¹ And when to the idea of inevitableness there has been added that of heredity in the forms in which it has sometimes been taught, it is no wonder that the whole aspect of life has seemed to be dark, whether the thinkers have felt themselves

¹ D. G. Rossetti, "The House of Life," lxxxvi.

driven to an eternity in which every mistake and every fault of this life must have its undying place, or have deemed that for the individual death is the end of his completed career.

Yet through all this there has been another strain—may we not say a higher strain?—which, in acknowledging law and development, has not abandoned belief in human free will, in a happy immortality, in a good God. As the poets have voiced that which is gloomy and perplexing in modern thought, so also they have shown to us that which is bright and hopeful. In Browning's words—

“All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall
exist,
Not its semblance, but itself ; no beauty, nor good, nor
power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the
melodist
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.

“The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too
hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard ;
Enough that He heard it once ; we shall hear it by-and-
by.”¹

The system of Kant, the German philo-

¹ R. Browning, “Abt Vogler,” x.

sopher, whose life extended from 1724 to 1804, is now, in many ways, rightly discredited. But those elements in his teaching by which it is insisted that the sense "I ought to do what is right" necessarily implies "I can do what is right," and so asserts the reality of human free will; that the reality of free will means that a moral ideal can be attained, and therefore, in the absence of the possibility of completely attaining it in this life, necessitates immortality, and, with immortality, the existence of God to realize the ideal;—have a significance which still remains. "If God, freedom, and immortality," says a living writer in full touch with the thought of to-day, Dr. Caird, "be necessary postulates with a view to the realization of the moral ideal, then they have for us the same evidence as the moral ideal itself."¹ And if we carry on the same process of reasoning, we reach also the fact of sin. For over against the conception which Goethe called that of "the Being to whom we owe our life, and in Whom all that deserves the name of life must find its nourishment," is set the opposing thought of what the same writer described as "the

¹ E. Caird, "The Evolution of Religion," i. 345.

thing, the wicked and inexplicable thing, which separates us from the Being.”¹

What, then, does Christ in His teaching say on these subjects? Certainly, He taught emphatically the awful solemnity of life; that some decisions must, from their very nature, be irrevocable; and that in character, as everywhere else, there is law, orderly development, and true continuity.² In this He recognized and Himself affirmed facts of existence which to some thinkers have been not only solemn truths, but also reasons for despair. But, in so doing, He never allowed that the consideration of these facts ought to rob man of hope. For in the very heart of His teaching are the supreme truths that the will of man is free, that God is a loving Father, that in Himself is forgiveness. It may be true that Nature pardons no mistake. It is part of the teaching of Christ that God in Him pardons even sins.

These supreme truths were not elaborated or made matters of argument by our Lord. But, none the less, they form an inseparable part of what He taught. If we were to

¹ Goethe, “Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship,” bk. vi.

² *E.g.* St. Luke xvi. 19-31; St. Matt. xxv., xxvi. 24.

remove from His words all which necessitates human freedom, the loving Fatherhood of God, and the forgiveness of sins, we should make a different Christ. And we are taught, too, that He was the revelation and declaration of the Father. In His life and words we are to see, according to His teaching, the true picture of what God eternally is. And in it we have found the very thing for which Browning's objector longed ; for here surely is the "sign," the

"Stirring of God's finger to denote
He wills that right should have supremacy."

And not only so. Not only does He show the will of God "that right should have supremacy" in that He Himself, being righteous and apparently vanquished, rose in triumph from the dead ; He shows also in the revelation of the Father, with whom He is personally One, that God is good.

III.

This consideration leads us on to an imperative demand made by very much of the thought of our day. It is that any god who can claim human allegiance must be a holy

god. It is that any religion which is entitled to authority must command and help goodness. We shall have, next week, to consider the words and work and being of our Lord as they bear on the life we live. But we may notice now that the revelation which Christ makes of God is, beyond everything else, the revelation of a holy God. In all that He manifests of Himself He is declaring the Father with whom He is One. His life is marked by the courage which can face the opposition of enemies and correct the mistakes of friends ; the zeal which confers earnestness in dealing with oppression, unrighteousness, and deceit ; the patience which can wait for the performance of good deeds ; the perseverance which can complete a work in spite of weariness and difficulty ; the long-suffering which can bear rejection and do what is right in the face of insult ; the considerateness which saves others from pain it is good they should be spared ; and that true love which does not shrink from inflicting pain where it is needed, and seeks the lasting good rather than the temporary pleasure of those who are its objects. Herein He manifests indeed the perfection of human life. He shows also who

and what is the God Whom He calls men to serve.

And here again is the standard He sets up for the lives of men. His own words are, "Ye . . . shall be perfect"—that is complete, with a holiness that is not partial or one-sided—"as your heavenly Father is perfect."¹

Surely, when thinkers of to-day claim that, if God exists and if He is to be served by man, He must be good, and that a religion which is to be worth anything must command holiness, the answer to the claim may be found in the teaching of Christ.

IV.

To turn again to the philosophic thought of the day, a striking feature of it is the demand for unity in the universe. The discrediting of large parts of the philosophy of Kant, to which I have already referred, has taken place mainly because his system has been thought to be dualistic. The great mark made by Hegel on modern thought is to be seen in the earnest attempt to find a

¹ St. Matt. v. 48.

principle of unity which may underlie all the phenomena of life. The thought of to-day, moreover, in spite of some apparently opposite tendencies, has a strong anti-materialistic element. The old confident assertions that the material is all are becoming rare. I do not understand Darwin,¹ or

¹ See "The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin," ii. 311, 312, "I had no intention to write atheistically. But I own that I cannot see as plainly as others do, and as I should wish to do, evidence of design and beneficence on all sides of us. There seems to me too much misery in the world. I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created the *Ichneumonidæ* with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of caterpillars, or that a cat should play with mice. Not believing this, I see no necessity in the belief that the eye was expressly designed. On the other hand, I cannot anyhow be contented to view this wonderful universe, and especially the nature of man, and to conclude that everything is the result of brute force. I am inclined to look at everything as resulting from designed laws, with the details, whether good or bad, left to the working out of what we may call chance. Not that this notion *at all* satisfies me. I feel most deeply that the whole subject is too profound for the human intellect. A dog might as well speculate on the mind of Newton. Let each man hope and believe what he can. Certainly I agree with you that my views are not at all necessarily atheistical. The lightning kills a man, whether a good one or bad one, owing to the excessively complex action of natural laws. A child (who may turn out an idiot) is born by the action of even more complex laws, and I can see no reason why a man, or other animal,

Spencer,¹ or Huxley,² as claiming that their explanations of material things necessarily involve the denial of all that is not material. If it is the case—as to me it seems to be the

may not have been aboriginally produced by other laws, and that all these laws may have been expressly designed by an omniscient Creator, who foresaw every future event and consequence. But the more I think, the more bewildered I become.” Cf. “On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection,” p. 429; “The Descent of Man,” p. 612.

¹ See, *e.g.*, “Principles of Sociology,” part vi. pp. 825–828.

² See, *e.g.*, “Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley,” i. 241, “I am too much a believer in Butler and in the great principle of the ‘Analogy’ . . . to have any difficulties about miracles. I have never had the least sympathy with the *a priori* reasons against orthodoxy, and I have by nature and disposition the greatest possible antipathy to all the atheistic and infidel school. Nevertheless, I know that I am, in spite of myself, exactly what the Christian world call, and, so far as I can see, are justified in calling, atheist and infidel. I cannot see one shadow or tittle of evidence that the great unknown underlying the phenomena of the universe stands to us in the relation of a Father—loves us and cares for us as Christianity asserts;” ii. 162, “Atheism is, on purely philosophical grounds, untenable. That there is no evidence of the existence of such a being as the God of the theologians is true enough; but strictly scientific reasoning can take us no further;” i. 299, “He took the opportunity to explain how he held ‘this union of materialistic terminology with the repudiation of materialistic philosophy,’ considering the latter ‘to involve grave philosophic error.’” Cf. i. 217, 244.

case—that philosophy and science are now seeking, not only a principle of unity, but a spiritual power also, they might well have recourse, for the supply of their need, to that part of the teaching of our Lord which looks through the material world with all its variations to the one spiritual Being Who is the Father in heaven and the animating force of the universe and man.

V.

And, further, modern thought has not been without yearning for union with God. To the scattered longings of the old philosophies, and the desire for communion, at all costs, with the unseen Deity, which recent investigations in “folk-lore” have shown to us with recurring emphasis, there is a parallel in the thought of to-day. It has found expression in Tennyson’s saying that

“The whole round world is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.”¹

It supplies the meaning of those passages in Browning in which the idea of the Incarnation has been expressed with magnificent

¹ Tennyson, “The Passing of Arthur.”

power,¹ and of the lines in which Rossetti depicted the work of art which had been touched by Christian influence—

“ Scarcely at once she dared to rend the mist
Of devious symbols ; but soon having wist
How sky-breadth and field-silence and this day
Are symbols also in some deeper way,
She looked through these to God and was God’s priest.

“ And if, past noon, her toil began to irk,
And she sought talismans, and turned in vain
To soulless self-reflections of man’s skill—
Yet now, in this the twilight, she might still
Kneel in the latter grass to pray again,
Ere the night cometh and she may not work.” ²

Such yearnings may be found by those who will look for them in the most unlikely quarters. And thus, the Lord Jesus Christ, in being Himself God and Man in one Divine Person, in founding a Church which was to be His mystical Body, in ordaining Sacraments which were to be the means of new birth and the communication of His Flesh and Blood, was not only responding to and satisfying the needs which had pleaded and

¹ R. Browning, “Saul,” xviii. ; “An Epistle containing the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician.”

² D. G. Rossetti, “The House of Life,” lxxiv.

struggled in the old heathen world, but was also providing for our later days that union with God in the desire for which the thought of all times shows its best ground of hope.

CHRIST AND MODERN
LIFE

LECTURE IV.

CHRIST AND MODERN LIFE.

TO consider, as we have already done, the relation of the Lord Jesus Christ to Judaism and heathenism and modern thought would be seriously incomplete if we did not go a step further and ask what is the meaning of His Person and words and work for modern life. And it may be said that in our last subject is the very heart of our whole inquiry. For a religion which cannot help morality stands self-condemned, and a religious teacher who does not influence life cannot supply what we need. There is, indeed, a strong presumption that He who has words of meaning and insight for the Jews and the heathen and the thought of our own day can also help us in the life we have to live; but, if we are inquiring at all into His relation to men and times, it is of the highest import

to us to ask what is that relation to our own life.

I.

There are those who are disposed to regard as superfluous, or even to some extent to resent as wrong, all such inquiries as those which really underlie this course of lectures. With unquestioning faith they are content to rest in the words of the Teacher and the works of the Saviour whom by inward assurance they know. In calm peace they commit their lives to Him, and it seems to them at the best unnecessary to ask whether and how He supplies the satisfaction of this or that need of the human race.

If such an attitude wears a somewhat strange aspect to some of us, who have been compelled by our character or our calling or the circumstances of our lives to observe and question and cross-examine everything which has met our view, let us be careful not to despise it. The quiet resting acceptance of what is believed to be Divine truth, which has experienced no doubt and allows no question, has a beauty and a force of its own.

There are, perhaps, issues with which it cannot deal ; there is, perhaps, a work to be done which it cannot do—issues and work which just now are forcing themselves with loud imperative voices on the minds of men ; —but still it has its place even in our modern world, and that place a high one. Only when it passes beyond its own sphere and attempts to sit in judgment on honest seeking to know the truth more fully does it begin to forfeit its claim to our respect and regard.

From the opposite pole of thought we hear the impatient question, What need have we any longer for a religion at all ? It may have been that, when the world was younger and knowledge was less, religion had its use. But what is the good of continuing the conditions of childhood when a man has grown up ; of retaining a religion which, if once a help, has ceased to be so ? And perhaps it is added that in these modern days, with education and civilization and experience, men know right from wrong for themselves without Christ or His Church ; they have strength of character and force of will to enable them to choose and carry out the right when they see it ; they do not need

to lean on any other person or on any institution ; and therefore they can live the life which is marked by the performance of duty without either the Christian religion or Christ Himself. It may be that to our Anglo-Saxon race, delighting to stand by itself and push its own way, such ideas have special attractions.

II.

It would be futile to ignore the fact that many at the present time suspect or think or vehemently assert, not only that men can do without Christ, but also that they are better without Him. And those who speak thus point to facts in the world or in human character as proofs of what they say.

In the first place, it may be pointed out that a feature of our time is the growth of nations. This nation of our own, it may be said, has felt with a fresh power the throbbing of national spirit and national life. It has recognized in new ways the burden laid on it by its position in the world, the height of its vocation to be a leader in Empire. It is responding to the call which it believes to

come to it because of its past history and its present life. With deep conviction, the sons of the nation believe that it is good for them and it is good for others that there should be expansion, conquest, rule. It is good for themselves because they are stirred to energy which else might lie dormant, to activities which else they might waste, it may be to self-denial they otherwise would avoid. It is good for others because in the line of the onward march of the nation there will be freedom, progress, civilization. And, it is added, what help is there in the Gospels for such a work as this? Nay, rather, are not the precepts of Christ a hindrance to carrying it out? And does not history show, alike in the majestic development of the Roman Empire and in the new forces which made themselves felt in England in the time of Queen Elizabeth, and during the long and noble reign which, to the deep sorrow of the nation, ended on Tuesday last,¹ that progress of this kind is greater as the religion of Christ seems to possess a less imperative claim?

¹ Her Majesty Queen Victoria died on January 22, 1901, between the delivery of the third and fourth of these lectures.

In the second place, we may be told of the greatness of modern commerce. Again, it may be said, How good a thing this is ! Look at the enterprise, the industry, the countless abilities, which it calls forth. Look at the prosperity, the ease, the happiness, which it brings in its train. Observe the many thousands whom it raises in conditions of life, in force of character, in power of resource. Take away from modern life all that commerce has done for it, and you will make it barren and unfruitful, dull and hard, denying scope to populations which otherwise it might usefully employ and gradually raise. And it is asked, Is it by the teaching of Christ that we may be aided in this mighty task ? Is there any great commercial enterprise, is there any individual commercial life, which can hope to attain to success by carrying out the principles laid down in the Sermon on the Mount ?

Thirdly, we may be met by the assertion that the expansion of Empire and the growth of commerce need behind them the exercise of statesmanship and the possibility of war. Either expansion or commerce calls continually for the work of diplomacy ; either

the one or the other may have at any moment to be abandoned or to be protected by force. And it is asked, If you are to learn the methods of diplomacy, or if you are to be successful in war, is it in Christ that you will find your teacher?

Fourthly, the questioner whom we are imagining may pass on to what touches still more intimately our own lives and say, True greatness of character is in its manliness, its robustness, its power to depend on self, its consistent strength. These are the forces which win their way in the battle of life; these are the features which are rightly respected; these are the elements which make a man really good. Honesty, truthfulness, purity, have their real virtue and nobility when they spring out of a character of this kind. And does not such a character, it may be asked, require an independence which is alien to the position of a disciple of Christ?

And perhaps a further inquiry springs out of the last. The law of Christ is, in some respects, a very stern law. To carry out His precepts means to many the suppression of natural desires and the control of natural

forces to an extent which makes life hard and painful. Can it be right, can it be best—it is asked, sometimes impetuously, sometimes with a sadness which almost amounts to despair—that a perpetual struggle to master instincts which seem to be nature's own implanting should be the lot of any?

These are some of the questions which are asked in our modern life? I do not think it is true to say that they are in all cases the outcome of unbelief. I do not think it is true to say that they are in all cases the utterances of those who are trying to find excuses for the rejection of the claims of Christ or for lax lives. Such an element, doubtless, there is in them sometimes. But in many cases such questions appear to spring from genuine puzzle, and to be asked by those who earnestly desire to know what is right, and would spare no pains to carry out what in conscience they might see to be best.

III.

Let us examine, then, these matters in which it is alleged that to take Christ as Master is not to be helped, but to be hindered.

There is the growth of national life and the expansion of Empire. Let us affirm at once that it is a gain for a nation to be strong and vigorous, and for a higher rule to be substituted for one that is lower. But, in affirming it, we must also notice the need of taking care that this strong and vigorous life and this extension of good government are not deprived of qualities without which they cannot continue to be gains. There is a danger lest, in the very development of life, in the very growth of power, national character become worse instead of better, and grow selfish, aggressive, unjust, cruel. Written deep in the history of the great Roman Empire, with all its many merits, is the warning of this terrible risk. And if it be the case that, without some higher element to guide and control the national character, self-interest and love of gain and even cruelty may take the place of the performance of duty and the work of benefiting others, then strength and vigour and expansion by themselves may only produce a monster that is itself hideous and is destructive of the true greatness of those who are its instruments. Does it not follow that, if modern life calls for

national vigour and national growth, this very fact shows all the more the need of Christ? There is nothing in Him or in His teaching which is inconsistent with that higher patriotism which is genuine love of country. His own tears shed over the city of Jerusalem show that He Himself was in this sense patriotic. There is nothing inconsistent with any desire to benefit others by expansion and extended rule. His words on meekness, disinterestedness, and care for others are a condemnation only of the lust of conquest, the desire for self-aggrandizement, the forgetfulness that others are, equally with ourselves, the creatures of the one God and the heirs of an eternal destiny. But in this condemnation they supply just that which a nation needs if its vigour and its growth are to promote its true good and not to ruin its best life.

There is the commerce of a nation and there is the business life of an individual. And here, again, is it not true that a sobering, controlling, restraining influence is needed? Commerce, left to itself, may easily become greedy and rapacious, selfish, unjust, and dishonest. Left to itself, it may easily make those engaged in it machines rather than men,

losing some of the best sides of life in one absorbing pursuit, deprived of the power of sympathy, fast fixed in hardness. May not the needed remedy be found in the words of Christ? There is nothing in what He says to discourage honourable effort, the honest making of money, the honest use of it when made. Nay, He bade His disciples, "Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness. . . . If . . . ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?"¹ He pictured the Christendom which was to be as "an organized kingdom of work—work, busy, earnest, urgent, unflagging."² But in the deep principles which are given vivid expression in the proverbial phrases of the Sermon on the Mount there is the needed check which may prevent the perversion of what ought to be a good.

There is the work of the statesman. It may be of the highest dignity and the greatest worth. It may easily be degraded to methods of policy which have parted company with honour, and sink to a form of

¹ St. Luke xvi. 9, 11.

² H. S. Holland, "On Behalf of Belief," p. 125.

trickery. It too needs to be controlled and restrained and guided. It too needs those principles of the Sermon on the Mount which, reasonably interpreted, as the Christian Church has all along interpreted them, require that due regard for others, that right repression of self without which the highest development of character cannot be. Of statesmanship thus elevated by Christian principle there have been instances in fact. A generation which has known the late Mr. Gladstone and the present Marquess of Salisbury has good reason for thinking that there may be lives devoted to the serving of their country in the great departments of the state which at the same time are committed with a still deeper devotion to the service of Christ.

There is war. And war surely may be utterly destructive to the characters of those engaged in it, unless in them there is a strong restraining and uplifting influence. Then, indeed, even in war there may be strange beauty of character. The *Happy Warrior* of the poet Wordsworth¹ has existed in life as well as in literature. Without such influence,

¹ Wordsworth, "Character of the Happy Warrior."

what is left but the oppressor who wades through blood recklessly shed to a goal marked out by selfishness? Till the sway of Christ is universal on human life, war must sometimes be a sad necessity. Its sadness has been recognized by great soldiers. The present commander-in-chief has lately borne his emphatic testimony to its ills.¹ If in this sad necessity those engaged in war are to escape the destruction of high and noble character, they can hardly afford to be without the words and example of Christ. For that which they need is to be found in the true lesson of His teaching and life, that conduct is to be ruled by the sense of duty, not by any form of the love of self.

There is the greatness of robustness of character. No true friend to human life ought to wish to see it destroyed or impaired. It has in it elements of real dignity and power and worth. It, too, left to itself, may easily become hard, unsympathetic, contemptuous of others, and perhaps eventually even

¹ The allusion is to speeches and letters of Earl Roberts, explaining that it would not be well that he should take part in festivities in his honour while the war in South Africa continued.

more pernicious than a character in which every form of strength is altogether lacking. Left to itself, again, it may easily be so dominated by pride that it is forgetful of its own weakness, and in some under-estimated trial makes shipwreck of itself even where it seemed most secure. To the vigorous and robust that gentleness and meekness on which Christ lays great stress may be a saving force.

And if it is the case that there are those for whom, from the nature of their being and the conditions of their lives, the law of Christ involves continual struggle and no little pain, is it not the case also that for them there are great gains? Do they not often, through the very stress of the conflict, grow in power of many kinds? Would they, when they calmly view the whole question, exchange the self-restraint they have won through many a battle for the slavery into which those have sold themselves who have not had courage or perseverance for the fight?

IV.

But, it may be said, you minimize one side of the teaching you profess to explain. It

may be true that the words familiar to us as "Take no thought for your life," "Take . . . no thought for the morrow,"¹ really mean, "Be not anxious, fretted, worried, distracted about your life," "about the morrow," and really condemn that state of mental apprehension and fear the tendency of which is to paralyze or weaken the power of performing present duties. It may be true that Christ does contemplate the exercise of prudent care and of business activity by His disciples. But He says also, "Blessed are the poor in spirit;" "Blessed are the meek;" "If any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also;" "Give to him that asketh, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away."² Is there any fair interpretation of sayings like these which a man living an ordinary life in the world can accept and follow, and at the same time be able to stand in the stress of to-day?

To this inquiry I make answer: Read the Sermon on the Mount in the light of common sense and reason and history. Examine

¹ St. Matt. vi. 25, 34.

² St. Matt. v. 3, 5, 40, 42.

carefully its structure and its phraseology. Remember the circumstances in which it was spoken and the people to whom it was addressed. If you will do so, I think you will find that the interpretation which has been adopted in this lecture not only has the support of the teaching of Christ's Church through all the Christian centuries, but also is required by the words of Christ Himself. "If thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out."¹ For once that a literal eye may need to be torn out, there are thousands upon thousands of instances in which something else of which the sacrifice of the eye is a vivid picture is to be done. "When . . . thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee;" "When thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber;" "When thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face."² For once that the literal precept is required, there are thousands upon thousands of instances in which some other way of avoiding ostentation and abstaining from making what ought to be a spiritual act into a means of gaining reputation is needed. And if you will understand all the teaching which is grouped

¹ St. Matt. v. 29.

² St. Matt. vi. 2, 6, 17.

together in the Sermon on the Mount on the principles on which, of necessity, you must understand these passages, you will find, I think, that its emphasis is on that repression of what is merely selfish and self-seeking and self-indulgent, and that stern and resolute performance of all the differing parts of duty for more of which our modern life would certainly not be the loser.

Yes, we can allow all that is good in national life and commerce and robustness of character, and at the same time maintain that, if these are to be secured from influences which would destroy their true worth, there is need of the words of Christ.

V.

It is easy to exaggerate the extent to which the needs of one age differ from those of another. The accomplished prelate the loss of whom this great diocese and many outside it had to mourn,¹ just before the national loss which is now occupying all our

¹ The Right Rev. and Right Hon. Mandell Creighton, D.D., Lord Bishop of London, died on January 14, 1901, eight days before the death of Her Majesty Queen Victoria.

hearts, expressed his opinion that it is "a preconception of every generation that its problems are exceptionally important, its difficulties exceptionally severe."¹ After all, human nature is very much the same in most differing circumstances and conditions. The capacities and requirements, the strength and the weakness, of the race go on from century to century. There were questions asked long before the Incarnation which we are still asking to-day. There have been needs felt in all times which we are feeling still.

Therefore we have to ask, not only whether Christ is a practical Teacher and Saviour in respect of those aspects of modern life which are pre-eminently marked just now, but also whether He has teaching and salvation for us in respect of those things in which we inherit our ancestors' needs.

A need of all times is the forgiveness of sins. The Jew needed it. The heathen needed it. Those who are civilized need it. Savages need it. In all degrees of knowledge, in all conditions of life, sin cripples energies and destroys powers and prevents man from living the life he knows to be best

¹ Creighton, "The Heritage of the Spirit," p. 150.

for him. It is not only that the consciousness of unforgiven sin produces a sense of guilt which is disquieting. There is also the feeling of paralysis in life which the same consciousness brings. To this great need of forgiveness there is the response of our Lord. He Himself said, "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost."¹ He drew the pictures of the publican who had prayed, "God, be merciful to me a sinner" going down to his house "justified,"² and of the father receiving with glad welcome the son who said, "I have sinned."³ He declared a purpose of His Incarnation to be that He might "give His life a ransom in the stead of many."⁴ He commissioned His apostles, and through them His Church to the end of time, "Whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them."⁵

Another need of all times is an example of life. It is not enough to have precept only. It is required also that a standard be set. Now, as always, men need to look outside themselves and see for their instruction

¹ St. Luke xix. 10.

² St. Luke xviii. 13, 14.

³ St. Luke xv. 17-24.

⁴ St. Matt. xx. 28 ; St. Mark x. 45.

⁵ St. John xx. 23.

and their encouragement a life which is a perfect pattern of goodness. Such a pattern and example are afforded to us by Christ. His dignity and courage, His patience and gentleness, His strong manliness and unwearying goodness, supply what we need. In the beautiful language of Dean Church, "In Him, in His way of working, all is complete, balanced, harmonious ; there is nothing missing ; there is nothing overgrown or disproportionate. There is tenderness and sympathy which none can gauge ; there is sternness and severity, rebuking and alarming ; there is terrible judgment, which appals and crushes. There is, in its place, the fearless rough word of righteous wrath ; in its place, too, there is the gentle, sparing, pitying word of forgiveness and comfort. . . . He is never idle, but He is never busy. He is ever at work, but never hasting, never hurried ; always in public, yet always in retirement. Barely do we read of His rest ; but He is always ready, always has time, always patiently waits till the hour shall come." ¹

A third need of all times is the strength

¹ Church, "Human Life and its Conditions," pp. 189, 190.

which comes from union with God. After all we can say about human capacities and human strength and the human possibilities of high character, it remains true that temptation to lower courses is very overmastering, that the performance of duty is very hard. We need in union with God to receive strength and to be given joy. This has been felt by Jew and heathen, by those who are civilized and by those who are savages. Our Lord provided, as we thought last week, those Sacraments of union with Himself whereby men are joined through His manhood to His Divine life. He appointed those means of grace which in His own providence His Church developed into a system of worship and prayer and communion. One of the sad features of our modern life is that so many, from whatever cause, miss the help provided for them by the kindly wisdom of God Himself. And scarcely less sad—perhaps not less sad at all—is the case of those who, knowing of the provision, and not without realization of its value, and from time to time having recourse to it, are content to let that due use of it which they cannot deny to be their duty as well as their high privilege,

slip outside the ordinary and habitual course of their life.

VI.

In conclusion, it must be recognized that the claims which Christ makes upon our allegiance are tremendous claims. He does not ask for half-hearted service, or for submission which touches only the surface of life. He does ask for the dedication of the whole man, body and soul, mind and spirit. But the question which troubles us in our best moments is not so much, Are the claims tremendous? does the response to them involve the committal of our whole being? as, Are the claims rightly made? can they be justified in the light of history and the light of conscience? And if these lectures have done anything to help any to realize more fully that the claims of our Lord and Saviour will bear to be looked at in the light of day, they will have done their work. They have dealt only, indeed, with one section of the evidence which supports those claims. But, as such, they are the outcome of a conviction—a conviction which gives to existence its

meaning and happiness—that, if we surrender ourselves to Christ, it is to One who has response to the deepest needs of the Jew and the heathen, of modern thought and modern life.

THE FATHERHOOD OF
GOD

A SERMON.

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD.

“And He said unto them, When ye pray, say, Father.”—
ST. LUKE xi. 2.

IN this passage of the Gospel according to St. Luke it is recorded that when our Blessed Lord, on the occasion referred to, ceased praying, one of His disciples said unto Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples.”

In reply to this request, our Lord gave the great prayer which was not only to be used by His disciples during their own lifetime on earth, but was also to be bequeathed by them as part of the inheritance for all time of the Christian Church.

“When ye pray, say, Father.” In the opening words of the prayer our Lord shows the spirit in which the whole of it is to be uttered; nay, He shows the spirit in which

all true prayer is to be made. And, in doing so, He shows also the foundation truth which makes the possibility of prayer.

That foundation truth is the Fatherhood of God. Believe that God is your Father; understand a little of what Fatherhood means; recognize the state and needs of your own soul; and you can pray. But if you do not believe that God is your Father; if Fatherhood is to you only a dim or a distorted idea; if you have little knowledge of, or little care for, the life of your own soul,—then your prayer, if it exists at all, must be marred and incomplete.

I.

There is a real sense in which God is the Father of all creation. From Him all created things have their being. "To us," writes St. Paul, "there is one God, the Father, of Whom are all things, . . . and one Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom are all things."¹ In Him all things are upheld. In God the Son, writes St. Paul again, "all things consist;"²

¹ 1 Cor. viii. 6.

² Col. i. 17.

and, consisting in the Son, they are sustained also in the Father, with Whom He is One.

In a higher sense God was the Father of man when the first man was made. "The Lord God," it is said, "formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."¹ He was created "in the image of God,"² that is, he had a spiritual being in some respects like that of God Himself. He was in the "likeness" of God, that is, he was given such union as he was capable of receiving with the goodness of God made to be a real possession of his own.

Man was thus, in the first days of human life, the child of God. As such, he had the happiness of the child. He was able to welcome and delight in the Presence of his Father, God. In the profound teaching about the coming and work of sin which is given to us in the third chapter of the Book of Genesis, it is implied that before the Fall man was able to rejoice in being near his Maker. It was a result of sin that "the man and his wife hid themselves from the Presence of

¹ Gen. ii. 7.

² Gen. i. 26, 27.

the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.”¹

Because of sin, man, the child of God, was driven out from his Father's household. “The Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden. . . . He drove out the man.”² Man became an outcast. It could even be said of him that, in one sense, he had ceased to be the child of God. It is possible for the good father of a wicked son to say, “He is no longer my child ; he has sinned so deeply, he has so greatly offended against my love, he has so terribly degraded his own nature, that I cannot any longer regard him as my son.” Yet in another sense man was still the son of God. Greatly as he had offended against the Divine goodness, and terribly as he had destroyed himself, his Creator could still describe him as made in His image.³ Even the wicked son, whom the good father cannot allow to be in his house, and cannot acknowledge as his son, is nevertheless still his child in the sense that he remains in possession of the life and the nature which he received from his father.

Terrible, indeed, were the consequences of

¹ Gen. iii. 8.

² Gen. iii. 23, 24.

³ Gen. ix. 6.

sin. St. Paul describes the Gentiles "as having no hope, and without God in the world."¹ The same Apostle declares, with reference to the Jews, that "by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified."² The whole human race had been involved in one common ruin by sin.

Yet, all the time before the Incarnation, there was the hope of recovery and restoration. The hope was founded on the mercy and goodness of Almighty God, and on His promises to mankind. There was reason for it also in the fact that there still remained in human nature a real, though elementary, sonship. Before the Fall it had been made the basis of union with God by supernatural gifts. In the Fall it had been robbed of this high state, and not only reduced to its elementary condition, but also weakened and defiled by sin. But it was there ; and it was capable of being quickened by means of the indwelling of God the Holy Ghost into a sonship which should be living and true.

¹ Eph. ii. 12.

² Gal. ii. 16.

II.

One of the purposes of the Incarnation of the eternal Son of God was the forgiveness of sins. "If any man sin," writes St. John, "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the Propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world."¹ The eternal Son of God, made to be the Son of man in the womb of Mary, died on the cross that we, in being forgiven, might have life. "As Moses," says our Lord, "lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth may in Him have eternal life."² As He died for us, so also for us He rose from the dead. He "was delivered up," says St. Paul, "for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification."³ Thus, it was the purpose of God the Father that, by means of the Incarnation of His eternal and Divine Son, the sons of men whom sin had banished from the Father's house should be brought back and placed within it, the sons of men

¹ 1 St. John ii. 1, 2² St. John iii. 14, 15.³ Rom. iv. 25.

whom sin had separated from God should be restored to living union with Him. "I will receive you," writes St. Paul, putting together words of God spoken through prophets of old foretelling the days of the Gospel—"I will receive you, and will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to Me sons and daughters."¹ "When the fulness of the time came," wrote St. Paul again, "God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, that He might redeem them which were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."² In still bolder language St. Peter describes it as one of the effects of the promises of God that Christians "may become partakers of the Divine nature."³

We are not left to conjecture in what way this precious gift of being made "partakers of the Divine nature" and the "sons and daughters" of God Himself is bestowed upon us. The teaching of the Baptismal Office that in Holy Baptism there is "spiritual regeneration" as well as "remission of . . . sins," the declaration of the Catechism that

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18; cf. Jer. xxiii. 3; xxxi. 1, 9; Isa. xliii. 6.

² Gal. iv. 4, 5.

³ 2 St. Peter i. 4.

the Christian is "made" in Baptism "a member of Christ" and "the child of God," are but the echo of the words of the New Testament. "In one Spirit," wrote St. Paul to the Corinthians, "were we all baptized into one Body;" ¹ that is, the Body of Christ.² "Ye are all," he wrote to the Galatians, "sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ."³

Thus, in very truth, is man once more made to be the child of God. That same Holy Ghost, Whose illuminating and invigorating power was rejected by man in the Fall, in Holy Baptism rests upon him and dwells within him, and uniting him to the sacred Manhood of the eternal Son of God makes him to be the son of the Father. That Divine image, which in the Fall was defiled and marred, in Holy Baptism is cleansed and renewed. That sonship, which by reason of sin was weakened and all but lost, is restored by grace and made to be a living union. In Holy Baptism we are not only "made the children of grace;" our

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 13.

² 1 Cor. xii. 12.

³ Gal. iii. 26, 27.

“new birth unto righteousness” makes us also the children of God Himself.

III.

In Holy Baptism, then, we are made children of God. In that great gift we receive also the power to exercise the privileges of sonship. There is the privilege of prayer. Far be it from me to deny or question the possibility of prayer to Almighty God from any of His creatures upon whom His Divine image has been marked. It was while the Jew Saul of Tarsus was yet unbaptized that the fact of his prayer was given by the Lord as a reason why the minister of Baptism should be sent to him.¹ It was while the Gentile Cornelius was yet unbaptized that the angel of God told him of the acceptance of his prayers, and the Holy Ghost sent St. Peter to command his Baptism.² The altar which the heathen Athenians dedicated “to an unknown God” was viewed by St. Paul as a movement, “in

¹ Acts ix. 11.

² Acts x. 3, 4, 19, 20, 30, 31, 47, 48.

ignorance" indeed, but not without meaning, towards "the God that made the world and all things therein."¹ And, in the present times, who shall dare to say that the vague, struggling prayers of the African, or of the Indian, or of him who, in the midst of a Christian civilization, has, without fault of his own, failed to receive the gifts of the covenanted sacramental grace, are unheard by the good God Who is indeed, in a high and special sense, the Father of the baptized, but is also, in a sense lower but true, the Father of all whom He has made? Who shall dare to say that, when a civilized or uncivilized heathen thinks in his heart, "I will arise and go to my Father,"² there is no answer of outpoured love from "Our Father which" is "in heaven"?³

And yet there is a special power in the prayer of the baptized. "If," says our Lord, "ye shall ask anything of the Father, He will give it you in My Name."⁴ We say "Our Father." We have learnt the truth of God. The indwelling Holy Ghost has united us to the Divine Son. We can pray

¹ Acts xvii. 23, 24.

² St. Luke xv. 18.

³ St. Matt. vi. 9.

⁴ St. John xvi. 23.

as the true children, placed in the very midst of the love and shelter of the home.

There is the privilege of worship and Communion. In the house of the Father, we, the true children, offer to Him our thanksgiving, our praise, our adoration. At the altar of the Father, we, the true children, present the sacrifice of the Body and the Blood of that Divine Son into Whose life we are knit. At the table of the Father, we, the true children, are fed with the children's food, that bread and that wine which are of heaven because they are the Body and Blood of Him Who, standing as a Priest, sitting as a King, in the heavenly places, is for ever Son of Mary and Son of God.

There is the privilege of service. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."¹ Again, we may not deny or question that there may be, "in ignorance,"² service of God in some to whom, in the mysteries of His providence, the call to the baptismal grace has not come, but who yet have been true to such light as they possess, —light which, let us remember, be it much or be it little, is a ray from that light which is

¹ Rom. viii. 14.

² Acts xvii. 23.

around the throne of God and results from the work of Him Who, as St. John teaches us, "lighteth every man."¹

But there is a high and special service of the true children, the baptized. It has its mark in conscious and ungrudging acceptance of the Father's will. It has its outcome in good deeds and kind words, in the overthrow of wrong and the promotion of right, and in the sanctification of personal life. Mindful of the standard set by the eternal Son of God in His human life, filled with the grace which comes from union with Him and the gifts of the indwelling Spirit, we realize and make sure our sonship as, in daily life, we give the obedience of faithful children to our Father.

We are keeping the Festival of All Saints. And as we look back, in gratitude to God, over the lives of those whom we know as the saints, is there any thought more helpful to us than that of the confidence which they had in God as their Father? He was their Father, and therefore, they believed, they could trust His wisdom, they could trust His goodness. In the power of that confidence,

¹ St. John. i. 9.

they were able to part with much that was pleasant and embrace much that was painful. In the power of that confidence, they were often able to throw in their lot with the cause that was weak, as this world counts strength. In the power of that confidence, they were able to dedicate themselves as a whole burnt offering to the God Who made them.

For you and for me, my brethren, this life must often be a dark and perplexing riddle. For you and for me, there must often be puzzles, not only in the world outside, but also in our own souls within. Good will it be for us if we are enabled to take, as the centre of our thought, and as the spring of our prayer, and as the force of our lives, the truth of the Fatherhood of God.

THE END.

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